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# A GUIDE TO ELEPHANTA

BY

DR. HIRANANDA SASTRI, M.A., M.O.L., D. LITT.,  
*Government Epigraphist for India.*



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## PREFACE

THE first official guide to Elephanta was *The Rock Temples of Elephanta or Ghārāpurī* which was published by the late Dr. Burgess in 1871. The account of the monuments of the Island which is given in the *Gazetteer of the Thana District* was written later in 1882. This was succeeded, first, by the publication entitled *The Guide to Elephanta Island*, which was published on the occasion of the visit of Their Imperial Majesties King George V and Queen Mary in 1911, and then, by the pamphlet called *The Caves of Elephanta* which the Bombay Public Works Department issued in 1914. All these publications—leaving aside the books which are published unofficially or privately—are now out of print and a trustworthy and up-to-date guide to the monuments is needed. The present book is meant to meet that need. Several illustrations of sculptures, a plan of the Main Cave and a map of the Island as well as of its environs are added to assist the visitor. These illustrations are supplied by the Superintendent of the Western Circle of the Archæological Survey of India, Poona. The map of the Island of Elephanta is based on his drawing No. 1318; that of its environs is taken from the Imperial Gazetteer Atlas of India (1931), plate No. 55.

In describing the monuments I am indebted to Dr. Burgess' *The Rock Temples of Elephanta or Ghārāpurī*. The information which has been given about the Portuguese accounts is taken principally from the *Gazetteer of the Thana District*. Other books consulted are named in the footnotes or in the bibliography attached to this Guide.

The caves were excavated about the fifth or the sixth century (A.D.) and, consequently, do not contain any specimens of early Indian art. The Gupta Empire coincides not only with a revival of Hinduism but with a wonderful development in learning and art, which, judging by the works of the period, must have been liberally patronised. Whereas in the early stage, Indian sculptural art was marked by a natural simplicity, in the early mediæval stage, which commenced about the Gupta period and lasted till about the end of the seventh century, it became 'formal' and 'cultured'. It was during this epoch that it reached perfection and produced some specimens which rank high among the world's sculptural masterpieces.

The sculptures of Elephanta are exclusively Brahmanical in origin and supply us with beautiful specimens of early mediæval Hindu art. There can be no two opinions regarding the decorative side, which is unreservedly praised by all. Opinions differ, however, regarding the formative side or the figure sculpture. The critic, not conversant with Hindu mythology and its underlying idealism, may not be able to fully appreciate the Brahmanical sculpture, especially when it is 'supernatural'. But, one familiar with Hinduism can-

not but admire and appreciate the beauty and artistic skill of the workmanship. The late Dr. Vincent Smith, in whom 'mediæval sculpture' seems to have 'aroused a feeling of repulsion', had to admit that it had 'undeniable merits'. One might unhesitatingly say with him that the works of the artists "frequently display high technical skill, great mastery over intractable material, and in the larger compositions, especially those of the western caves, bold imagination and a knowledge of the effects of light and shade. The best specimens of the ascetic type are endowed with serene dignity and convey the impression of perfect repose with extraordinary skill. In the modelling, although realistic representation of the muscles is deliberately avoided, the capacity of the artists to give details, if they were so minded, is attested by the hands, which in many cases are shaped with the utmost delicacy and expressiveness. The energy of passion is sometimes rendered with masterly power, and occasionally, but rarely, facial expression is vividly exhibited". These remarks apply not only to the Brahmanical but also to the Buddhist sculpture. In the case of the Buddhist sculpture, however, we have to remember that the products of the *Hīnayāna* school are more lifelike and natural than those of the *Mahāyānists*, whose cult is akin to that of the Hindus of the *TĀNTRIC* school. To the *Hīnayānist*, Gautama Buddha is the sympathetic human teacher who moves about among his disciples and hearers, expounding the *Dharma* or the Sacred Law, but to the follower of the *Mahāyāna*, with its Buddhas and Bōdhisattvas, its attendant deities and demons, spacious temples and



images, pompous ceremonial and noisy festivals, he is only the ethereal representation of Amitābha, the celestial Buddha of Boundless Light who dwells in *Sukhāvātī* or 'the World of the highest happiness'. Mahāyānism seems to have flourished about the seventh century (A.D.) and to have greatly influenced Hinduism, just as in its turn it must have been affected by the latter. The tendency to adore the supernatural predominated in the minds of the Mahāyānists as well as of the Hindus and found expression in the sculpture which they produced. In the later ages this influence became baneful and made the cult images 'stereotyped and lifeless, mere symbols, as it were, of religion, devoid alike of spirituality and of anatomical definition'. The Elephanta sculpture, however, was, to a great extent, free from such an influence, and did not allow mere artificiality or conventional formulæ to get the upper hand over real art. It was rather the exercise of his discretion that enabled the sculptor to make the fullest use of his consummate skill and produce some of the beautiful representations we see in the caves of Elephanta, e.g., the figure of the *dvārapāla* (*frontispiece*) standing in a dignified and awe-inspiring pose to guard the entrance to the *liṅga* shrine; Naṭarāja, the Divine Dancer, calm and unperturbed in spite of the whole world moving round him; and Pārvatī overcome with bashfulness at the time of her marriage with Śiva.

The Main Cave and its adjuncts were originally adorned with paintings, now lost, save for a few faint traces. The Portuguese accounts would show that

they probably resembled the Ajañtā paintings in splendour, beauty and artistic execution.

It is very much to be regretted that these beautiful monuments suffered so greatly from ruthless vandalism during the Portuguese occupation of the Island when the caves were used not only as cattle sheds and for storing fodder but as an artillery testing ground by the soldiery. Had this not been the case, they would have been in a much better condition and we would have been better circumstanced to form a truer idea of their pristine beauty.

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# A GUIDE TO ELEPHANTA

## CHAPTER I

### TOPOGRAPHY

The Bombay Presidency is exceptionally rich in interesting cave temples which throw a flood of light on the history of architecture and religion in India. According to the estimate of the late Dr. Burgess, there are not less than 900 excavations of various sorts and dimensions in Western India, the majority of which are within the limits of the Bombay Presidency. Near Bombay itself there are at least 130 caves lying on the islands of Elephanta and Salsette. These excavations are divided into three classes according to the sects to which they belong, namely, Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jaina. The earliest known examples dating from about the third century B.C. are Buddhist. Brahmanical caves, whether connected with the cult of Śiva or of Viṣṇu, come next in order of time and seem to range from about the fourth to about the eighth century (A.D.). The caves at Elephanta come under this category and are connected with the worship of Śiva. Earlier writers attributed them to the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century. This date, however, seems to be too late, for, in consideration of the technical achievement as well as other reasons given in the sequel,

INTRODUCTORY  
REMARKS.



it can reasonably be assumed that they were excavated about the sixth century (A.D.). Plastic art in India, which was at its zenith in the Gupta period, began to deteriorate during the later ages. This being the case, it becomes doubtful if we could get such sublime images as we find in these caves during the period of its decay.

The Island of Elephanta is situated in  $18^{\circ} 58' N.$  and  $72^{\circ} 58\frac{1}{2}' E.$ , about seven miles north-east of the Apollo Bandar. It consists of two hills, separated by a narrow valley, and measures about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles in circumference. The surface area varies from 6 to 4 square miles according as the tide is at ebb or flow.

Elephanta is a range of small hills wooded with mango, tamarind, *karañda*, and other trees. The hill rises gently on the west and, with an irregular outline, stretches east across the ravine, gradually rising at the extreme east to a height of 568 feet above the sea. The foreshore of sand and mud is fringed by mangrove bushes, occasional palms dotting the background of low hills. Palms are also to be seen adorning the hills here and there.

Very few people inhabit the Island, and their chief occupation is to cultivate rice and rear sheep or poultry for sale in the Bombay market.

**APPROACHES TO  
ELEPHANTA.**

The most convenient way of visiting the caves of Elephanta is by a ferry boat or motor-launch from the Apollo Bandar or by the harbour ferry from the Carnac Bandar. These boats run daily in the afternoon, but on Sundays, the motor-launch goes twice, once

in the morning and again in the afternoon. They make the passage in about 2 hours. During the winter season a motor-launch goes to Elephanta from the Apollo Bandar twice daily, first at about 8-30 A.M. and again at about 2-30 P.M. The launches and the ferry-boats land passengers at the modern landing-place which lies towards the north-west side of Elephanta. The caves are about a quarter of a mile from this place and can be reached by easy steps which, according to an inscribed tablet fixed in them, were constructed in 1854 by a merchant named Thakar Karamsi Ranmal Lohāna. At the foot of these steps coolies can be engaged to carry visitors in wooden chairs swung on their shoulders. The harbour ferry stops at the old landing-place at Rājghāt, lying to the south-west of the Island; whence the caves are reached by a walk of nearly one mile over a fairly good but unmetalled road.

The name Elephanta, by which the Island is now known, originated with the Portuguese who so designated the place after a colossal stone statue of an elephant standing near Rājghāt, the landing place. This statue measured 13' 2" by 7' 4". The head as well as the neck of it dropped off in 1814 and later the remainder of the statue fell to pieces. In 1864, however, the mass of stones comprising the statue was removed to the Victoria Gardens in Bombay where it was re-set. The accompanying photograph represents it as it stands at present. The sketch given by Burgess in the title page of his *Rock Temples of Elephanta or Ghārāpurī* is a copy of the drawing which Captain Basil Hall, R.N., prepared in 1814.

DESIGNATION  
OF THE ISLAND.

OLD DESIGNA-  
TION.

To the local people, including the boatmen of Bombay, the Island is known by the name of Ghārāpurī, which may have been the old Hindu designation of it, although there is no known inscriptional or literary evidence to support this hypothesis. What this designation really means is not clear. That the second part of the name, *viz.*, *purī*, signifies 'town' does not require demonstration. As to the first component, some writers have connected it with the Ghāris or Guruvas, the Śūdra priests of some Śaivite temples. Ghārāpurī, in that case, would mean the town of the Ghāri-priests. But I would connect it with the Prakrit word *ghāra*<sup>1</sup> meaning fort or fortress-wall (=Sanskrit *prākāra*). The name Ghārāpurī in that case would signify Fortress-city and would be quite an appropriate designation for the Island. From a short inscription, incised on the copper vessel mentioned further on<sup>2</sup>, it would appear, however, that about the 11th century (A.D.), the name of the Island was possibly Śrīpurī, meaning the town of wealth<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See *Dēśināmamālā*, II. 108.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 22 f. and plate IV.

<sup>3</sup> If *śrī* is only an honorific prefix, the name would mean 'the celebrated town'. This appellation would suggest another derivation—*ghāra* may be a derivative of the Sanskrit root *ghri*, 'to sprinkle'. Ghārāpurī might have been the city of coronation, in which case Śrīpurī would be a suitable alternative name.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY

For the early history of the Island we have to EARLY PERIOD. depend on tradition alone, as no records which might throw any light on it are now forthcoming. The stone inscription which was removed to Europe about 1540 by the Portuguese Viceroy Dom João de Castro, if found and deciphered, might help us in elucidating it. The Portuguese, according to Diogo de Couto, when they took 'Baçain' and its dependencies 'went to this pagoda and removed a famous stone over the entrance that had an inscription of large and well-written characters which was sent to the king, after the Governor of India had in vain endeavoured to find out any Hindu or Moor in the East who would decipher them. And the king D. João III also used all his endeavours to the same purpose but without any effect, and the stone thus remained there and now there is no trace of it.' The *Thana District Gazetteer*<sup>1</sup> speaks of two inscribed copper-plates also, which were found 'in clearing earth in the north-east corner of the Island and are believed to have been in England in the possession of one Mr. Harold Smith, a contractor, who took them there about 1865 A.D.' No information is available as to their contents and the place where they are now preserved.

There are several local traditions or folk-tales connected with the origin of these excavations, but they are of little or no historical value. One of them

<sup>1</sup> *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. XIV, p. 80, f.n. 1.

connects the excavations with the five Pāṇḍava heroes of the *Mahābhārata*; another, with the mythical Asura king Bāṇa and his beautiful daughter Ushā, while the third ascribes them to Alexander the Great!

EVIDENCE OF  
INSCRIPTIONS.

No history of Elephanta is available and we have to draw inferences regarding it from the very scanty material which may be gathered from a few inscriptions known to us. That Western India formed part of the vast Mauryan Empire during the reign of Aśoka is an established historical fact which does not require any corroboration. Elephanta is quite close to the mainland and its very situation would suggest that whosoever governed the coastal regions also governed it. Whether it remained under the uninterrupted sway of the Mauryas even after the break up of the Mauryan Empire it is impossible to affirm with definiteness. Circumstantial evidence, however, would indicate that it probably did so. The Aihole inscription would show that a Maurya dynasty was ruling the west coast of India during the first half of the seventh century after Christ. This<sup>1</sup> document is dated in the 556th year of the Śaka era (=634-35 A.D.) and records that Pulakēśin II, the successful Chālukya ruler of Western India, sent his hosts to the 'Konkaṇas' and vanquished the Mauryas there.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the Appendix to the *Medieval Temples of the Dakhan* (*Archæological Survey of India*, Vol. XLVIII, Impl. Series), pp. 79 ff., where several references to Puri are given, mention is made of a copper-plate grant of A. D. 584. In the absence of details it is not known which grant is meant. The statements made in this Appendix regarding Chāḍaḍaṇḍa require revision.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. VI, pp. 1 ff. The 20th stanza of this inscription has been thus rendered by Kielhorn: "In the Konkaṇas, the impetuous waves of the forces directed by him speedily swept away the rising wavelets of pools—the Mauryas."

The term Koṅkana connotes the whole of the strip<sup>1</sup> of land lying between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, although it is used in a somewhat limited sense also. That the Koṅkana<sup>2</sup> Mauryas were conquered by the Early Chālukyas is also recorded in the Kauṭhem<sup>3</sup> grant of Vikramāditya V dated Śaka 931 (=1009 A.D.). The Kanaswa stone inscription<sup>4</sup> of Śivagana which is dated in the Mālava year 796 expired (=738-39 A.D.) glorifies the illustrious Maurya race and the king of that lineage named Dhavala, describing him as a 'supreme' ruler. This would show that Mewār and the surrounding tracts were held by a Maurya dynasty during the eighth century after Christ. The Nausāri (Baroda State) plates<sup>5</sup> of the Gujarāt Chālukya Pulakēśirāja, dated in the Kalachuri year 490 (i.e., 739 A.D.), would also show that the Koṅkana Mauryas must have been ruling in the west of India though they were conquered by the Arabs in the eighth century. These Arabs, who are styled as Tājikas in the document, were in turn routed by Avanijanāśraya Pulakēśirāja. Further, the Vāghlī (Khandesh) inscription<sup>6</sup> of the Śaka year 991 (=1069 A.D.) mentions a Maurya chief named Gōvindarāja as a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fleet, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, in the *Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol. I, part ii, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> The epithet of Koṅkana has been used for discrimination. We have "Mauryas" cropping up in other parts of India, long after the Imperial Mauryas; but whether they or these Koṅkana Mauryas were actually descended from the Imperial Mauryas we do not know for certain.

<sup>3</sup> *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XVI, pp. 15 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 55 ff., ll. 4-6.

<sup>5</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol. I, part i, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. II, p. 224 f.

subordinate of the Dēvagiri Yādava feudatory prince Sēmpachandra II, and states that the original town of the Mauryas or rather of this branch of the Maurya stock was Valabhī, the modern Wala in Surāshṭra or Kāthiāwār. In view of all these inscriptional records it stands to reason to hold that the country lying round Bombay including the coast of Southern Gujarāt was governed by the chiefs of the Maurya lineage even up to the tenth century after Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The Aihole inscription to which reference has been made above tells us that Pulakēśin II reduced Purī after attacking it 'with hundreds of ships.' This Purī was evidently the capital of the Koṅkana Mauryas and was praised as 'the Goddess of Fortune of the western Sea.'<sup>2</sup> The identity of this Purī has not yet been determined; but from what this document states about it, it is not unreasonable to surmise that it stood somewhere near or on the sea. Presumably it lay on the Island of Elephanta itself. This Island is rich in ancient remains. A portion of it, now a hamlet standing on the north-eastern-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Early History of the Deccan, Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol. I, part ii, p. 187 f. n. 10. Apparently the scions of this stock were scattered in different parts of India during different epochs. Hsuan-tsang writes of one Pūrṇavarman whom he mentions as the last descendant of Aśoka to occupy the throne of Magadha. (See *Watters, On Yuan Chwang*, Vol. II, p. 115).

<sup>2</sup> The verse in which this description is given occurs just after the one recording the subjugation of the Mauryas and is thus rendered by Kielhorn:—"When radiant like the destroyer of Pura, he besieged Purī, the Fortune of the western sea, with hundreds of ships in appearance like arrays of rutting elephants, the sky, dark-blue as a young lotus and covered with tiers of massive clouds, resembled the sea, and the sea was like the sky."

most side of the Island, still bears the name Mora (marked on the accompanying map) which is only a reminiscence of the term Maurya.<sup>1</sup> The old landing-place is still called Rājpurī which reminds us of the Purī of the Aihole inscription. In the year 1579 (A.D.) the Island went by the name of Purī<sup>2</sup>. The inscription incised on the copper-vessel, published in the sequel, mentions the town of Śrīpurī, which is probably identical with this Purī, for śrī can well be taken as only an honorific prefix. Assuming this identity we might say that Elephanta was being governed by the Koṅkana Mauryas when it was taken by the Chālukyas. From the latter it went to the Rāshtrakūṭas, who defeated the Chālukyas, and thereafter it went to the Chālukyas of Kalyāni in the reign of Taila II (cir. 997 A.D.)<sup>3</sup>, and from them to the Yādavas. All these dynasties governed the west coast of India one after the other.

The Yādava dynasty was vanquished by the Musal-  
mān invaders <sup>LATER MEDIE-  
VAL OR MUHAM-  
MADAN PERIOD.</sup> <sup>4</sup> about the end of the thirteenth century (A.D.). When Alāu-d-dīn Khalji overthrew the Yādavas in 1294 (A.D.) the Island must have fallen into his hands. During the greater part of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century it was, along with the rest of the coast of Thāna, nominally under the Musal-mān rulers of Ahmadābād.

<sup>1</sup> Morē or Mori is only a *taḍbhava* of Maurya. Cf. Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. I, p. 126, etc.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 11 below.

<sup>3</sup> *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, *Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol. I, part II, p. 430.

<sup>4</sup> *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III, pp. 114, 115, 121, etc.



**PORTUGUESE  
PERIOD.**

In 1534 the Island passed into the hands of the Portuguese and was rented to one João Pires for the annual quit-rent of 165 pardaos.<sup>1</sup> It was under the control of the latter till 1548, when it passed to Manuel Rebello da Silva, who made it over to his daughter, Dona Rosa Maria Manuel d'Almeida.

**MARATHA  
PERIOD.**

In the year 1682 the Island must have formed part of the Maratha dominion, for, Sambhāji is said to have threatened the Portuguese by fortifying it against them about that time. Even the great Śivāji is believed to have started founding a fort on the top of its main hill, which commands Bombay and also the sea to a great extent.

**BRITISH PERIOD.**

The Island was finally occupied by the British, who took it in December 1774. In connection with the defence of Bombay, a battery of heavy guns was established on the top of the western hill, but the Island is no longer of any military importance.<sup>2</sup>

**AGE OF  
ELEPHANTA  
SCULPTURES.**

Assuming that the Purī of the Aihole inscription is the modern Elephanta it will not be unreasonable to infer from what has been stated above that the sculptures of Elephanta were in existence at the time of Pulakēśin II, *i.e.*, about the first half of the seventh century A.D. On the evidence of the carnelian seal, described below,<sup>3</sup> a still earlier date might be assigned to them. Their age will go still farther back if the figure, which according to Burgess,<sup>4</sup> Porphyry the

<sup>1</sup> According to Webster's *New International Dictionary* one Pardao=four shillings roughly.

<sup>2</sup> *Annual Progress Report of the Western Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1907, p. 21.*

<sup>3</sup> Page 23.

<sup>4</sup> *The Rock Temples of Elephanta, etc., pp. 20, 67-68.*

Greek scholar and historian (*circa* 304 A.D.) described in his treatise entitled *de Styge*, were identical with the representation of Ardhanaīśvara-Śiva, found in one of the panels<sup>1</sup> of the Main Cave. I am however of the opinion that the sculptures of Elephanta, executed as they are with great artistic skill, belong to a period when Hindu sculpture was at its zenith and were in all probability wrought in the Gupta epoch of Indian history. Plastic art in India began to deteriorate during the later period and could not have produced the fine statues we see in these caves.

The accounts given by some annalists of Portugal, PRESERVATION. as recorded by Burgess in his book on Elephanta or in the *Thana District Gazetteer*, would show that the caves of Elephanta were more or less intact when the Portuguese took possession of the Island in 1534. Dom João de Castro saw the caves in 1539 and being struck by their fine execution considered them to be the work of some 'superhuman' agency. In 1550 Garcia d'Orta found them much damaged by cattle. J. H. Van Linschoten visited the Island in 1579 A.D. and described the caves as deserted and ruined. In his *Discourse of Voyages* he mentions the Island by the name of Pory which would show that in the sixteenth century (A. D.) it must have been known by the designation of Purī. According to Diogo de Couto, the caves were further spoiled by the mischievous soldiers at the beginning of the 17th century. Then again in 1673 they further suffered at the hands of the Portuguese who used them as cattle sheds and stored fodder there during the rainy

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, pp. 43 ff.

season.<sup>1</sup> In 1712, one of their hidalgos fired several shots from a big gun into the great cave to divert himself with the echo, and thus broke some of its pillars. Grose (1750) described the caves as water-logged. According to him the sculptures were in a tolerable state of preservation until the arrival of the Portuguese, who were at some pains to maim and deface them, even bringing field pieces to the demolition of the images! Cave No. VI, which lies on the eastern hill, then served as a Christian Church. In 1865 the noses of two of the faces of the Mahēśamūrti (miscalled Trimūrti) figure are said to have been damaged.

**ELEPHANTA IN  
MODERN TIMES.**

From the time it was occupied by the British in 1774, a small garrison was maintained on the Island for many years in connection with the harbour defences and the caves were then under the military authorities. In 1875, King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, was entertained here at a banquet.<sup>2</sup> From 1890 the Public Works Department began to look after the monuments and take steps to arrest the progress of further decay. Many of the pillars, which were in a parlous condition, were strengthened and repaired, though a good deal of what was desirable from an archæological point of view could not be accomplished. In 1909, the monuments of the Island were declared "Protected" under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act. Since then they are being conserved with necessary care by the Indian Archæological Department.

<sup>1</sup> See Burgess, *The Rock Temples of Elephanta, etc.*, pp. 53 ff., and *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. XIV, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition, Vol. IX, p. 261.

## CHAPTER III

### ART

The sculptural art of ancient India is usually believed to have commenced in the reign of Aśoka, the great Mauryan Emperor, whose rule lasted from cir. 273 to cir. 232 B.C., though we may yet discover evidence of an even earlier date. Like other kindred branches of art, it has undergone three phases of development: the initial stage, the stage of perfection and the stage of decay<sup>1</sup>. Each of these stages is marked by distinguishing features and may be assigned to different schools of thought. Chronologically these schools may be termed Early, Mediæval and Late. For the sake of convenience we might ascribe them to periods ranging from the third century B. C. to the third century after Christ, then from the fourth to the eighth century A. D. and, lastly, from the ninth to the twelfth century A. D. Here we are not concerned with the art of the period preceding the Mauryan epoch; nor have we much to do with the products of the times which followed the twelfth century A.D. The plastic art of ancient India began to deteriorate in the thirteenth century A.D.

STAGES IN THE  
DEVELOPMENT  
OF SCULPTURAL  
ART IN INDIA.

The Early school of sculpture was at its best during the ascendancy of the Āndhras in the first century B.C. The sculptures of Elephanta contain no specimens of this school. They came into existence long afterwards. Yet it is necessary to know the characteristic features of the early period so that the sculp-

EARLY PERIOD.

<sup>1</sup> This division is to be treated as conventional.

tural products of the Mediæval school may be properly appreciated. The keynotes of the Early school, in brief, were the natural simplicity and the transparent sincerity with which the sculptor narrated the legends in the expressive language of the chisel in order to glorify religion. It is because of this simplicity that the products of the early period still appeal to our feelings.

**MEDIÆVAL  
PERIOD.**

The Mediæval school flourished during the Gupta period, commonly held to have lasted from about 350 to about 650 A.D. During this epoch sculptural art in India reached the stage of perfection. A comparison of the products of the Early and the Mediæval schools would show that during the Gupta age sculptural art became "cultured, more formal, more self-conscious and more complex," and that whereas the Early school took the formative side as a mere medium to narrate religious stories, the Mediæval school established a closer contact of thought with art and required the sculptor to be much more artistic and to pay greater attention to the technique in order to make his work realistic and lifelike. And the Mediæval school was wonderfully successful in producing beautiful specimens not only well defined and symmetrical in outline but also remarkably expressive of modesty, calm contemplation and repose. Some of the best figure-sculptures left to us, such as the Buddha image at Sârṇāth near Benares, the Vishnu and Śiva images at Deogarh in the Laltpur sub-division of the Jhansi district in the United Provinces, the imposing reliefs at Ellora and the magnificent sculptures of Elephanta, are the outcome of this school.

The Gupta epoch was marked by the "Renaissance" RENAISSANCE OF HINDUISM. of arts in India and a general outburst of the mental activity of her people, perhaps never equalled before or since. During this age, not only was the country prosperous and learning in all its branches encouraged, but arts and crafts were patronised on all sides and a great impetus imparted to the religious activities of the people. The Gupta Emperors like Samudragupta or his son Chandragupta, great patrons of Brahmanism as they were, revived the old rites or ceremonies and *yajñas* like the *Aśvamēdha* which had remained forgotten for a very long time. Their personal encouragement must have led to the complete revival of Hinduism, so lucidly reflected in the sculptures of the period. These potent rulers were, no doubt, officially Brahmanical Hindus, but according to the custom prevalent in ancient India, they looked on every Indian religion with a favourable eye. In spite of their toleration, however, Buddhism suffered a gradual decay during their ascendancy, as is evidenced by the accounts of Fa-hien and Hsüan-tsang, the well-known Chinese pilgrims, who came to India about this time.

Hinduism has two main branches or sects, namely, TWO MAIN SECTS OF HINDUISM AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON INDIAN ART. Vaishnavism and Śaivism. The former regards Vishnu and the latter, Śiva, as the Supreme Lord. Though both these sects have, in their turn, contributed largely to the development of plastic art, yet, it is rather the latter, *i.e.*, Śaivism, which has added a new chapter to its history by producing some of the best cave temples and sculptures in India. The caves of Elephanta,

also were the outcome of the activities of this branch of Hinduism.

**MAIN FEATURES  
OF ELEPHANTA  
SCULPTURE.**

As has been noted before, the sculptures of Elephanta possess most of the distinguishing features of the Mediæval period. Some of the colossal figures seen in these caves are marked by reasoned restraint of ornament and a definition of detail as well as 'vitality', which the products of the later period do not possess.

**PAINTINGS IN  
THE CAVES.**

The Main Cave and its adjuncts were originally decorated with paintings which have now disappeared. Had they been preserved, the Elephanta sculptures would have given us beautiful examples not only of plastic art but of the art of painting as well. The traces of these paintings still to be seen in the ceilings of the Main Cave and elsewhere are noted in the sequel, where their description, as supplied by the Portuguese and other eye-witnesses of the seven-teenth and eighteenth centuries, is given.

**COMPARISON  
OF ELEPHANTA  
SCULPTURES  
WITH ELLORA  
RELIEFS.**

The caves of Elephanta give us some of the best specimens of Brahmanical or Hindu art, the equal of which is not easily found elsewhere. The imposing reliefs of Ellora, like the Bhairava figure in the Daśāvatāra temple representing the rescue of Mārkaṇḍēya by Śiva, also furnish us with similar examples, but it is doubtful if they can rank with the best figures we see in the caves of Elephanta, such as the representations of Naṭarāja and of Sadāśiva. The Ellora sculptures are 'less accomplished in technique, though more florid in style', and on that account seem to belong to a somewhat later period.

It may not be out of place here to draw a very brief comparison between the Buddhist and the Hindu sculpture of the Mediæval period. There is a great deal of similarity in the technique or artistic skill of both. So far as the 'ascetic ideal' is concerned, the Śaiva and the Buddhist sculptures have much in common, for, the Buddha, like Śiva, was also a *mahā-yōgin*, i.e., a great ascetic. Śiva and his deeds were the theme of the Śaivite sculpture just as the Buddha and the legends connected with his previous births form the main subject of the Buddhist sculpture. Śiva is the personification of the 'ascetic life' and of the 'Supreme Knowledge' without which *mōksha* or final emancipation cannot be gained. By nature he is a *yōgin* or ascetic and, consequently, the incidents of his life could only be few. His incarnations were not so multifarious as those of Viṣṇu, who, to relieve the gods as well as human beings of their distress, had to manifest himself in more numerous forms or *avatāras* than Śiva. The Buddha was also an ascetic *par excellence*, but before he attained *Bōdhi* (or Enlightenment) he had to undergo countless metempsychoses giving rise to the *Jātakas* or birth stories, a number of which have been so beautifully depicted in the well-known reliefs at Bharhut, Sānci and other places. The result was that the artist, having the 'ascetic ideal' to follow, did not get as large a scope to represent the myths of Śiva as he did in the case of Viṣṇu or, more especially, of the Buddha. Śaiva sculpture would, therefore, either represent the god as a great ascetic and give the myths connected with his creative as well as destructive powers, or would

BUDDHIST AND  
BRAHMANICAL  
SCULPTURES OF  
THE MEDIÆVAL  
PERIOD  
COMPARED.



tell the popular stories of Śiva or of his consort Pārvatī. Like the ideal *yōgin* or ascetic, he is represented as wrapped up in meditation, regardless of what was going on around and even forgetful of Pārvatī. The Buddha is also shown similarly absorbed in contemplation at the time when he assumed 'the adamantine pose' with the firm resolve not to get up till he attained *Bōdhi*, i.e., Supreme Knowledge. The Buddhist sculptures, especially of the *Hīnayāna* school, where the Buddha figures as a historical personage, are much more realistic or natural than the Brahmanical ones. The products of the *Mahāyāna* school of thought, on the other hand, are cumbered with conventionalities and artificialities, as are the Brahmanical sculptures. Like the latter, they too are tinged with supernatural or transcendental features, such as multitudinous arms, heads, etc. These features gradually became more and more predominant, the result being that the Buddhist as well as the Hindu sculptures became after the twelfth century (A.D.) merely lifeless symbols of religion devoid of any spirituality.

SYMBOLICAL  
INTERPRE-  
TATION OF  
SOME OF THE  
ELEPHANTA  
SCULPTURES.

The sculptures of Elephanta owed their origin to Śaivism, and they therefore illustrate and reflect the lofty idealism as well as the intellectuality of the early Śaiva philosophy. To understand and appraise them at their real artistic value, some knowledge of Hindu mythology and metaphysics is indispensable. We may take some examples. The first panel to our left (Plate XVI), when we enter the Main Cave, gives a beautiful representation of Śiva as the *yōgin* or ascetic absorbed in meditation. In his destructive aspect he is shown (Plate VIII) as the killer of Andhaka, the

personification of darkness or ignorance that blinds human beings and is vanquished only by the trident of light or knowledge. The Mahēśamūrti figure, miscalled Trimūrti, which is one of the finest reliefs in all India and, evidently, the principal sculpture in the Main Cave, is a vivid expression of the unification of the three different aspects of the Supreme Being. It shows Śiva not only as the Destroyer but also as the Creator and the Preserver of the Universe. The face that represents him as the Preserver is marked by a repose, seldom met with in other sculptures. As the great Creator he is very powerfully depicted in the first panel to our right (Plate VII). The sculpture represents him as Natarāja and visualises his mystic dance of creation. The god is here shown as setting the whole universe in motion, himself remaining unperturbed. The wild movements of his limbs, the waving of the arms and the legs as shown in the sculpture, are markedly contrasted with the serenity and dispassionateness so vividly expressed in the face. The vigour and the skill with which the artist has brought out this contrast would have been still more striking had the mineral colours decorating the carvings been preserved in their original beauty. The idea depicted in the panel is one of the most inspired and majestic conceptions of Hindu art, and the image of Śiva, as drawn in it, is undoubtedly a work of consummate skill.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANCIENT RELICS FOUND ON THE ISLAND

#### STONE HORSE.

Besides the stone elephant and the inscriptions mentioned before several minor remains of considerable interest have been found on the Island. Of these, the stone horse deserves first mention although it is now irretrievably lost. It stood somewhere on the eastern ridge of the hills, near the top of the ravine where the hills draw close together, and was probably carved out of a block of trap. Dr. Fryer noticed it in 1675. Ovington (1690) described it more fully, though perhaps less accurately, as "so lively, with such a colour and carriage, and the shape finished with that exactness that many have fancied it, at a distance, a living animal, rather than only a bare representation". Pyke in 1712 called it Alexander's Horse and gave a drawing of it showing a stiff zebra-like animal whose lower part was not cut out of the rock. According to Hamilton (1720) it was not so well-shaped as the elephant. It seems to have disappeared during the following forty or fifty years, as neither du Perron (1760) nor Niebuhr (1764) remarked upon it in their accounts of the Island.

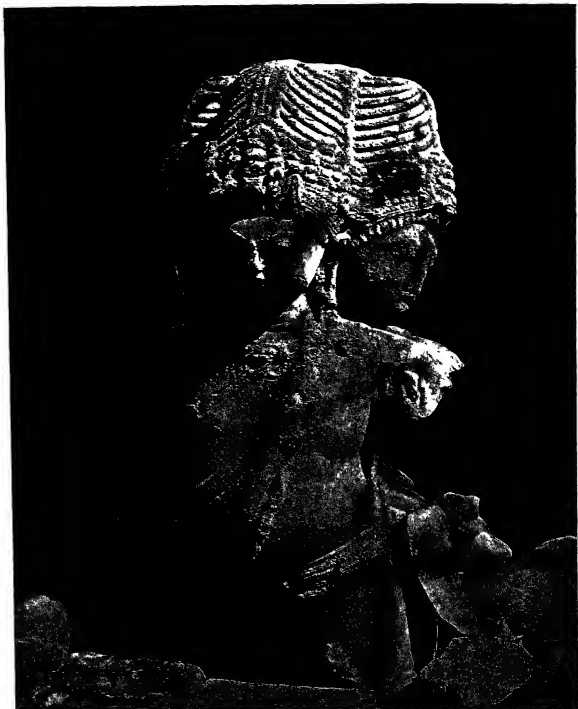
#### REMAINS ON THE EASTERN HILL.

Among the remains<sup>1</sup> on the eastern hill, besides the two caves (Nos. VI and VII) and the water cisterns, the solid brick structure, which stands above them at a height of about 560 feet is of importance. In 1882

<sup>1</sup> See the Map, Plate XIX.

PLATE II





SADĀŚIVA

Mr. Henry Cousens, the then Superintendent of Archaeology, Western Circle, examined it by sinking a shaft in the middle but without any definite results. Further examination is needed to ascertain its real character. It may have been a Buddhist *stūpa*, and the water-cisterns below it might have belonged to the monastery attached to it.<sup>1</sup> The bricks with which it was constructed measure about 15 in. × 9 in. × 2½ in. and show that it was constructed about the Gupta period (*cir.* 5th century A.D.).

Amongst the movable antiquities found on the Island, the fragmentary stone image of Sadāśiva,<sup>2</sup> now deposited in the Prince of Wales Museum at Bombay, is specially noteworthy. It is executed with great artistic skill and is called by some art critics a masterpiece of Indian sculptural genius. The pedestal which we see detached in the photograph (Plate III) possibly belonged to it. There is a much-worn Kanarese inscription incised on this pedestal which, on palæographic grounds, can be assigned to about the ninth century (A.D.). The extant portion of the record reads

STONE IMAGE  
OF SADĀŚIVA.

*Baḷadāri pratishṭhā Śiva....rsāmikamī,*

meaning

“consecrated by Baḷadāri....Śiva of”.

<sup>1</sup> It is taken to be a watch-tower in the *Annual Progress Report of the Western Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 1901, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> It is incorrect to take it as the representation of Brahmā, the god of creation, and theorise that the Main Cave was a temple of Brahmā and that the figure was originally enshrined in the Main Cave and that the *linga* which is now found there was put in afterwards. See Mr. Havell's *Ancient and Mediæval Architecture of India: A Study of Indo-Aryan Civilisation*, p. 160.

The mention of Śiva in the inscription would lend strong support to the identification of the sculpture with Śiva.

SOME OTHER  
RELICS.

INSCRIBED  
COPPER-  
VESSEL.

Of the other portable antiquities which were found on the Island, including the fragmentary stone images of Viṣṇu and of Mahishāsuramarddinī, which are also preserved in the aforesaid institution at Bombay, two deserve special mention. One is a copper jar, found in the silt of the large cistern lying in the west wing of the Main Cave. On its neck there is a short Dēva-nāgarī inscription, in corrupt Sanskrit, reading

[Ōm?] Saṁvat 114[3 Kṣa]ya-saṁvasva(tsa)rē  
Chaitra-sudha (śudī) 14 Śrīpurī<sup>1</sup>-vina(sha)yē=tra  
Śrī-Jōgēśvarī(rī)-dēvyāḥ tāṇśa(mra)palai[h\*] 194  
lōhīkṛittāḥ(taḥ)[[]]

It may be translated thus :—

In the Saṁvat year 1143, the cyclic year Kṣhaya, on the 14th day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra here in the district (?) of Śrīpurī of the goddess Jōgēśvarī (*this vessel*) was made of 194 *palas* of copper.

The date given in this record corresponds to Wednesday, the 15th April, 1086 A.D. On account of its being easily portable it cannot be stated definitely whether the vessel originally belonged to the cave or was brought from outside. But as it came from the cistern, it may not have been extraneous. It was used for taking out

<sup>1</sup> The word which follows Śrīpurī actually reads *vinayē*, but has been corrected into *vishayē*, meaning 'in the district or division of'. If it is taken as it stands in the inscription, i.e., as *vinayē*, it can be rendered by 'in the jurisdiction of'.

INSCRIPTION ON THE COPPER-VESSEL.

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ १ ॥

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ २ ॥

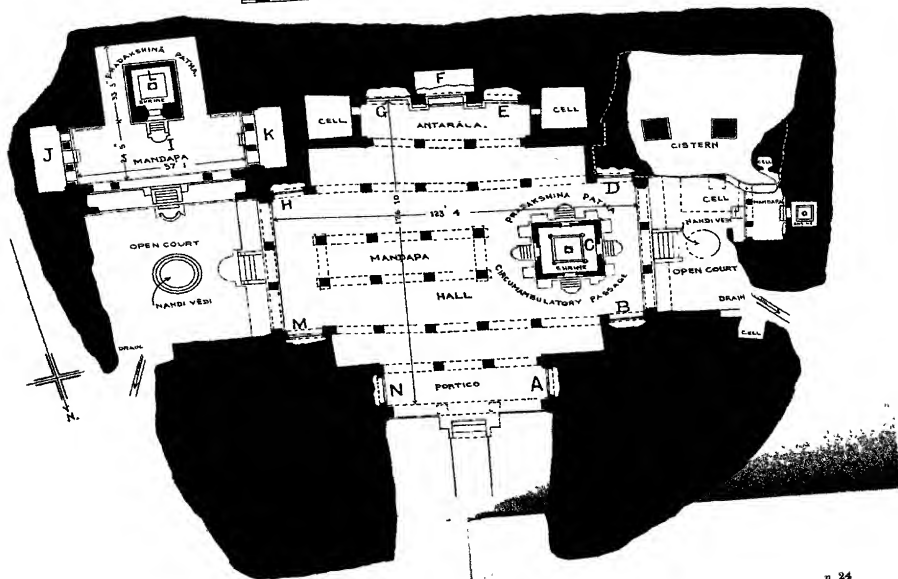
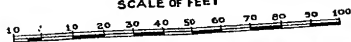
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ३ ॥

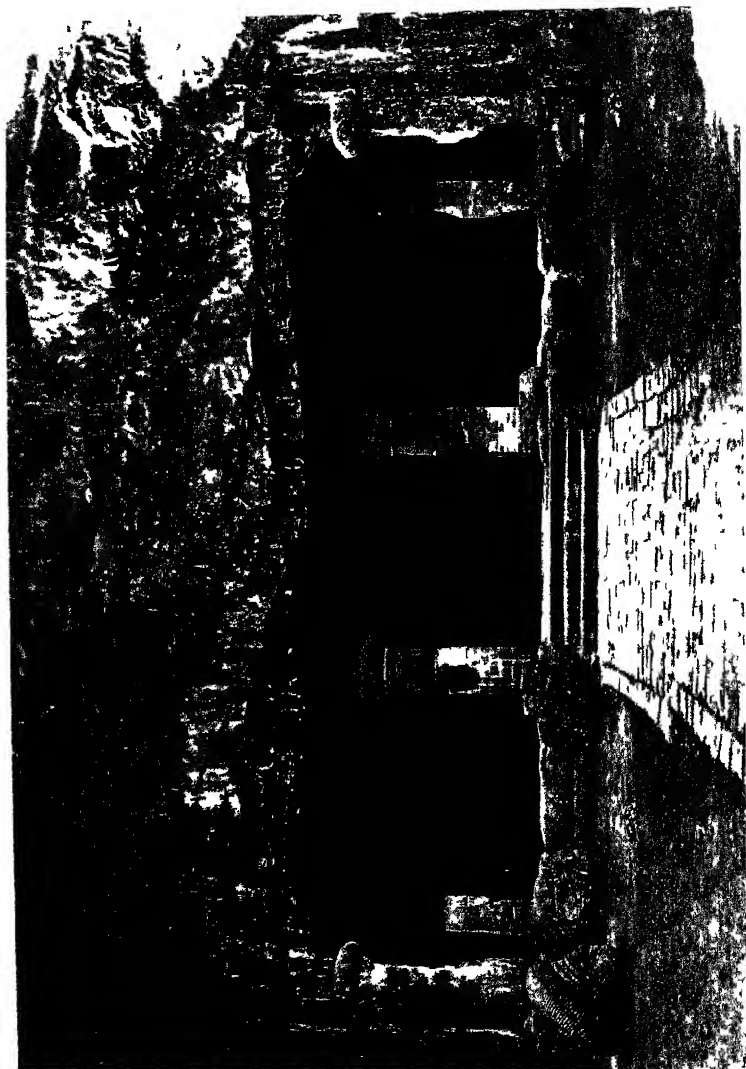
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ४ ॥



# PLAN OF THE MAIN CAVE.

SCALE OF FEET





MAIN CAVE, VIEW FROM NORTH

water and, apparently, fell into the reservoir whence it was removed. As stated before, we cannot say with certainty whether the name of the locality was Purī or Śrīpurī. Assuming that the vessel belonged to the cave, the record makes it very probable that the place went by the name of Śrīpurī about the 11th century after Christ. The word Jōgēśvarī occurring in the inscription reminds us of the Yōgēśvarī caves in the Thāna district and would lead to the surmise that both these excavations were under one control.

A similar relic is a small seal, which, according to Burgess<sup>1</sup>, was dug out in 1869. It is stated to be an <sup>CARNELIAN</sup> SEAL. oval light ruby coloured carnelian tablet measuring 0.435 in long and 0.35 in broad. The face is an ellipse measuring 0.37 by 0.26 inch and bears the legend 'Nārāyaṇa' engraved on it in letters of the 5th or 6th century A.D. It was in the possession of the late Dr. Bhau Dajī when Burgess published an account of it, but where it is now is not known.

<sup>1</sup> *Rock Temples of Elephanta or Ghṛrāpurī*, p. 80.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MAIN CAVE

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

Of all the excavations to be seen on the Island of Elephanta, the Main or Great Cave (marked No. 1 on the accompanying map) is the most important. It lies on the western hill of the Island at an elevation of about 250 feet above the sea level. In front of it, a paved open terrace, about 80 yards long and 40 yards broad, shaded by large *nīm* trees and commanding a fine view, stretches to the north-east. The entrance to the cave has recently been enclosed by an open railing. On either side a rocky bank rises to a rugged tree-fringed front, about 40 feet high. The cave (Plate V), hewn out of a hard compact species of trap rock, has three openings, one on the north, another on the east and the third on the western side, thus giving ample light to the interior. The principal entrance, indeed the only one that can now be said to be quite open, faces north. Over its front, across the whole breadth, ran the eaves, about 4 feet deep, which have now disappeared together with the two front pillars. The cave consists of a central hall and four aisles or vestibules. From the front or north entrance to the back, it measures about 130 feet, and its length from the east to the west entrance is also approximately the same. The porticoes on the three sides are about 54 feet long and 16½ feet deep. The depth as well as the height varies on the east and west sides. The body of the cave is supported by six rows of columns, six in each row, except at the corners on the

west side, where the uniformity is broken to make room for the shrine. These columns seem to differ not only in size and shape but even in their principal details. Actual measurement shows that no two of them stand in a line. The noteworthy feature these columns possess is the fluted or pot-shaped capital (Plate VI) with which they are adorned. In this decoration they closely resemble the columns found in some of the caves at Ellora.

Each of the porticoes has two pillars and two pilasters. The main columns are very massive and originally numbered twenty-six, besides the sixteen which are attached to them. Eight have been destroyed and the others are much injured. As neither the floor nor the roof is perfectly horizontal, they vary in height from 15 to 17 feet.

We now proceed to examine the sculptures in the cave. Starting from the right side, the principal figure in this compartment (marked A on the plan) which is first seen is of Śiva, shown as Natarāja or the 'King of Dancers'. The compartment is raised on a low base and is 10 feet 9 inches wide and 13 feet deep, the height being 11 feet 2 inches. The central figure must have been about 10 feet 8 inches in height and seems to have suffered a good deal during the past century. From the account of Dr W. Hunter it would appear that the first right and the third left hand were entire in 1873. Now only the fourth left hand remains. This figure of Natarāja seems to have had eight arms. The first right arm, perhaps, passed across the body and came to the left side about the

ŚIVA AS  
NATARAJA OR  
THE KING OF  
DANCERS.

waist, and the second was thrown out from the body, the fore-arm being bent so as to bring the hand before the breast. Now it is broken beyond the elbow. The third fore-arm is entirely gone, it probably held a *paraśu* or battle-axe, with a cobra, the rod of the axe being touched by the fourth arm which is bent upwards, the hand is broken off. The first two arms on the left side were probably hanging down though they are now broken off near the wrists, the third is bent upwards but similarly damaged, the fourth is extended above the shoulder and seems to hold up a portion of the robe. The right thigh is bent outward but broken off near the knee, and the left leg is entirely gone. The armlets, which have been elaborately wrought, are still sharp and distinct, as is also the belt round the waist tied at the side, with its end fastened to a part of the robe spread over the right thigh (Plate VII)

To the left of Śiva is the figure of Pārvatī, 6 feet 9 inches in height. Her face, bosom and hands are damaged and she wears large ear-rings, broad ornamented armlets, a girdle with carefully carved drapery and a thick necklace from which hangs a pendant. To the right side of Śiva is to be seen a well-cut and almost complete figure of Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed god, holding a *paraśu* or axe in his right hand and possibly a broken tusk in the left hand. A little below him is the skeleton form of Bhṛngī, the devoted attendant of Śiva, shown in the same dancing posture as his master. Beyond it, towards the proper right, is a large male figure with a high cap, having a crescent and a skull with a snake emerging from it. The *śakti* or spear held in the right hand would show that it



NATARĀJA-SIVA (SIVA THE LORD OF DANCERS)





represents Kumāra, the commander-in-chief of the gods. In front of him is a sitting figure probably of the musician Tandu, the disciple of Śiva and Bharata's teacher in the art of dancing, supposed to be the originator of the frantic dance called *Tāṇḍava*. To the left of Kumāra stands a damaged female figure whose dress has been carefully and sharply cut. The head is mutilated. The legs, as well as the fore-arms, are completely gone

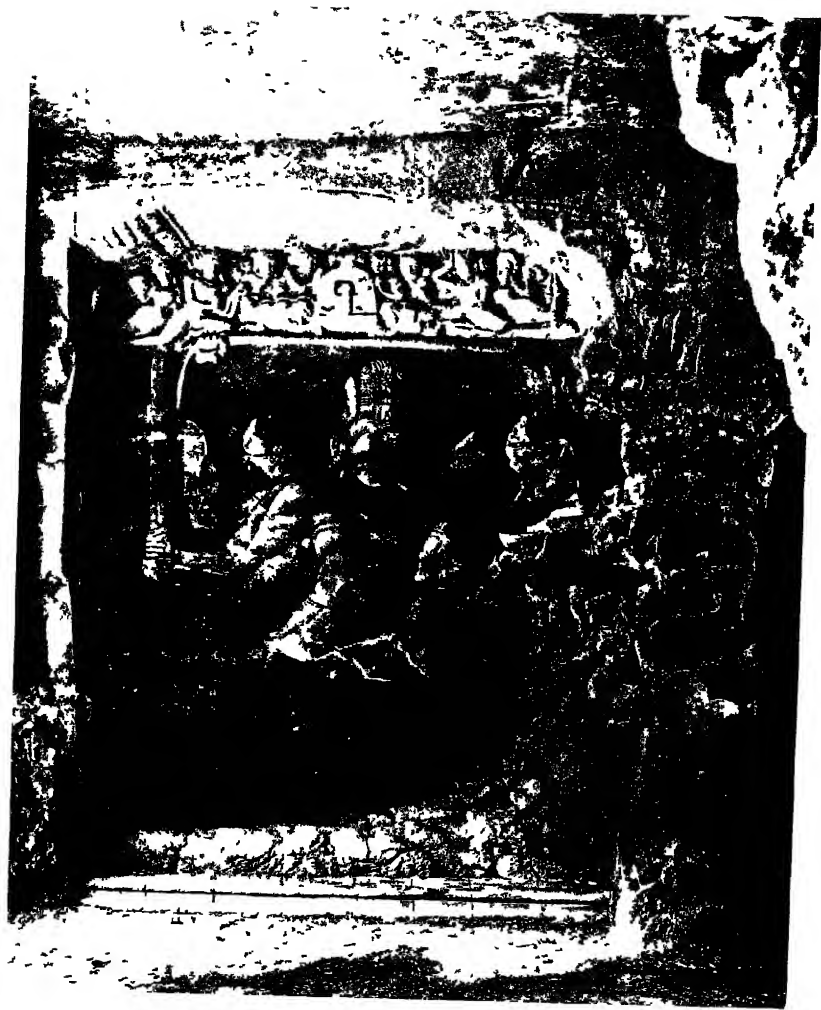
Above this group is Brahmā, the god of creation. He has four faces, and is carried by five *hamsas*, or swans. His front and rear right hands and also the front left hand are broken. The rear left hand has an *ājya-pātra* or sacrificial vessel for holding *ghee* or clarified butter. Between Brahmā and the head of Śiva are three flying figures, a male between two females, representing some celestials. A similar group is shown on the opposite side as well. Behind Brahmā are two standing figures, one of which, with hair gathered up, seems to be some *rishi* or ascetic. Above the right shoulder of Pārvatī, Vishnu is shown riding his vehicle Garuda, whose head is gone. In one hand Vishnu holds the *gadā* or mace, and in the other, the *śankha* or conch. Over Pārvatī's left shoulder Indra, riding his elephant Arāvata, is to be seen. The damaged figure behind Vishnu, which holds a water vessel or *kamandala*, perhaps represents some ascetic similar to the one on the opposite side.

The next panel represents Śiva as the killer of the demon Andhaka and is one of the finest specimens of sculpture of the period to which the cave belongs.

ANDHAKĀSURA-  
VADHAMŪRTI-  
ŚIVA.

ŚIVA THE  
KILLER OF THE  
DEMON  
ANDHAKA.

(Plate VIII). The principal figure here measures about  $11\frac{1}{2}$  feet in height and has a high and profusely carved head-dress showing a skull, a cobra and a crescent over the forehead. The expression of the face is fierce and passionate, the jaws are set and the tusks project downwards from the corners of the mouth. The eyes are large and apparently swollen with rage. Over the left shoulder and across the thighs hangs a *rundamālā* or garland of skulls. Śiva is here represented with eight arms, though five of them are now mutilated as are both the legs. The front right and left hands were broken by the Portuguese in the 16th century and the others have suffered since. All the arms have ornaments below the shoulders and bracelets on the wrists. The second right hand wields a long sword ready to strike, the third holds some indistinct object, while the fourth is broken a little above the elbow. The second left hand holds a bowl under the victim Andhaka who is seen pierced through by the *triśūla* or trident, the terrible weapon of Śiva, while the third holds a bell to intamate the moment when the fatal blow is to be struck at the victim. The fourth left arm is now broken; with the corresponding right arm, it must have held the *gaja-chaṁṣa* or elephant's hide, the raiment of Śiva, who in consequence of his wearing it is called *Kṛttivāsās* (=covered with skin). Here it looks like a screen or background, but the head of the elephant shown by the side of the god and the story given below would make it quite clear that it could be nothing else. Śiva wraps the hide round his loins. But here, he is represented in a state of frenzied excitement and is flourishing it in the air.



ANDHAKĀSURAVADHAMŪRTI-ŚIVA (ŚIVA DESTROYING THE DEMON ANDHAKA)



The legend connected with this sculpture is thus described in the *Purānas* —

Andhaka, one of the sons of Kaśyapa by his wife Diti, was a powerful king of the Asuras or demons. Through his austere penance he propitiated Brahmā and got several boons from him. Owing to these boons he became invincible and worsted the gods at every step. Thereupon the gods approached Śiva and complained to him of their woes. While Śiva was listening to their troubles, Andhaka came to Kailāsa to carry off Pārvatī. Śiva was enraged at his audacity and got ready to fight and vanquish him. At that very time, Nīla, another demon, assumed the form of an elephant and secretly approached Śiva to kill him. Nandin, the devoted attendant of Śiva came to know of this and informed Virabhadra, who assumed the shape of a lion and killed Nīla. The skin of this elephant was presented by Virabhadra to Śiva. Thereafter, Śiva set out with his *ganas* or attendants as well as Vishnu and other gods to kill Andhaka. He struck the *asura* with his arrow and blood began to flow profusely from the wound caused by it. Each drop of the blood, as it touched the earth, gave rise to another Andhaka demon. Thus there arose thousands of such demons to fight against Śiva and the other gods who helped him. Thereupon Śiva thrust his *triśūla* or trident into the body of the original and real Andhaka demon and began to dance. With his *chakra* or discus Vishnu started cutting down the secondary *asuras* or demons produced from the drops of the blood of the principal one. To stop the blood from falling on the earth Śiva created the *Śakti*, called *Yōgēśvarī*, and other gods also sent

out their *Saktis* or energies in female forms, characterised by their attributes, to catch all the drops of blood as they fell from the demon and stop further multiplication of the secondary Andhakas. Finally, the demon lost his vitality and was vanquished by Śiva, who consequently became known as *Andhaka-ropu* or the enemy (*i e.*, killer) of Andhaka.

The figures below the principal one are badly mutilated. To the right are seen fragments of three forms—one male and two female—and above them two *rishis* or ascetics with a small figure in front, and above it, a female figure. Opposite this group, on the left, are some traces of figures of dwarfs. A small figure peeping over the elephant's head is also visible.

The top of the panel is occupied by an interesting relief. In the centre of it, and immediately above the head of Śiva, is a peculiar piece of carving, somewhat resembling a *stūpa* with a curved groove in the middle. It is held by two flying figures and is flanked by two worshippers, one on each side. Possibly this carving represents a Śiva shrine with a *linga* standing in the centre. At the extremities of the relief divine couples (*mithunas*) are portrayed. The ceiling of this aisle still bears the traces of painting which, probably, at first decorated the whole cave.

#### ŚIVA SHRINE.

A few paces from this compartment bring us to the north door of an interesting *linga* shrine, marked C on the plan, which stands in the west aisle, enclosed by four columns of the cave (Plate IX). It is a plain cubical cell and has four doors which face the principal directions. Each of these doors is approached by a flight of six steps which had to be provided as the floor



ŚIVA SHRINE WITH DOOR-KEEPERS (NORTH AND EAST)





of the shrine was higher than that of the central hall of the cave by about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet. The doors have plain jambs with two bands around them. Inside, both in the floor and the roof, are the sockets for the door-posts which are now lost. On either side of each door we see the figure of a *dvārapāla* or door-keeper standing majestically. These figures are eight in number and vary in height from 14 feet 10 inches to 15 feet 2 inches. Some of them have also a dwarf attendant. All the door-keepers are crowned with a beautifully designed and exquisitely carved head-gear, a very prominent and attractive feature of these figures. The head-dress is shown as made up of the twists of matted hair in the form of a tall cap which is technically termed *jaṭāmukuta*. Of these eight *dvārapāla* figures, only one, at the south-east corner, is in a fair state of preservation (Plate I, *Frontispiece*). It is marked with a large human skull carved in front of its head-gear. The parted lips show the teeth. The figure is decorated with plain armlets and wristlets. A ball-like object is held in the right hand, which is up-turned and placed opposite the navel. The left hand rests on the knot of the robe outside the thigh, as is also the case in the other figures. The folds of the robe hanging behind the left leg of the *dvārapāla* on the south side of the east door are remarkably well cut. Each door-keeper wears a necklace of beads, and several of them are decorated with well-designed and carefully carved breast ornaments. The one on the western side of the southern entrance seems to have two letters cut underneath the right arm which may be read as 'Śiva'. They were, apparently, incised later.

The *sanctum sanctorum* is plain on the inside, no two sides of it being equal in their measurements. In the middle stands a *pīṭha* or pedestal which is 9 feet 9 inches square and about 3 feet high. In the centre of the pedestal there is a large hole in which a *linga*, cut from a stone of a harder and closer grain than that of the caves, has been fitted. The lower end of the *linga* is square but the upper portion is circular and measures about 2 feet  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length. There are deep holes cut at each of the four corners of the altar which must have been used to fix an awning over the *linga*. In the compound outside, a big fair is held every year in February, on the occasion of the celebrated festival of *Mahāśmarātra*, when the votaries of Śiva visit Elephanta in large numbers to worship this *linga*.

The *linga* is the mysterious symbol of Śiva and represents the energy or the source of the generative power in nature. It is the principal idol, the central object of adoration in Śiva temples. The worship offered to this symbol consists in bathing it with water or milk or with both, besmearing it with *ghee* and sandal-wood paste, presenting *bilva* (Aegle Marmelos) leaves and flowers to it, and also burning incense before it with the chanting of *mantras* or hymns.

WESTERN  
COURT.

Turning to the west and descending by a flight of steps to the court-yard below, a much decayed circular platform is to be seen directly in front of the shrine just described. It must have formed the base for the figure of Nandin, the celebrated *vāhana* or vehicle of Śiva, which is now lost (see plan).

To the south of the court-yard, there is a spacious LARGE WATER-  
CISTERN. water-cistern, 66 feet 3 inches long, 55 feet 6 inches wide and some 17 feet deep. A portion of the rock and the floor of the porch to the north-west seem to have fallen down and blocked the cistern some time ago. In 1924-25 the reservoir was cleared out and refilled with rain water. At the time of its clearance the above-noticed inscribed copper-jar, some fragments of sculptures, a number of earthen pots and a set of six bell-metal dishes were found. All these antiquities are now deposited in the Prince of Wales Museum at Bombay.

By the side of this cistern we see another small SIVA SHRINE IN  
THE WESTERN  
COURT AND ITS  
SCULPTURED  
PANELS. *linga*-shrine which is furnished with a portico, measuring about 27 feet long, 13 feet 7 inches deep and 8 feet 10 inches high, and supported by two square pillars and as many pilasters, now destroyed. We enter the portico by a flight of steps. At the north end of it is a group of figures somewhat similar to those in the left or eastern recess, marked N in the plan, at the north entrance to the Main Cave. In the centre is Śiva seated on a lotus throne, held up by two figures, probably Nāgas, marked with heavy wigs, and with bodies shown up to the middle only. The left hand of Śiva rests on his thigh; the right one is slightly raised. The arms are broken. Though the attributes are not clear, a comparison with similar sculptures elsewhere would show that Śiva is here represented as Lakulīśa (the Master or Wielder of the *lakula* or club). To his right there is a seated figure holding a plantain. A bearded ascetic is seen behind him. A similar

seated figure is shown on the left. Above this there is an image of Brahmā with some flying attendants on each side.

A door at the back of this portico leads into the shrine which measures about 10 feet 7 inches by 9 feet 7 inches. In the centre is a *linga* fixed in a roughly cut altar. On each side of the door is a *dvārapāla* or warder with two demons at his feet and two fat flying figures above his shoulders. To the south of this door, that is, towards the left side of the visitor, is a group of figures in which Śiva performing the Tāṇḍava dance is most prominent. Here the god is represented as having six arms and three eyes, his high crown being ornamented with a crescent. The three right hands are mutilated. The front one must have held a cobra, and the one behind it, a club. The front left hand seems to hold the drapery, the object in the second is defaced, while the third hand is extended in the *varada-mudrā* or gift-bestowing pose, the palm being turned upwards. To his right side is a plantain tree with a figure sitting on the ground. Above is carved Brahmā, the god of creation sitting on a lotus borne by a swan, his typical emblem and vehicle. To the left of Brahmā is a figure, which represents Yama, the god of death, riding a buffalo with a bell fastened to its neck. Near the front left arm of Śiva is to be seen a female figure, possibly Pārvatī, wearing a neatly looped head-dress with a jewel on her forehead. Above her left shoulder is Indra, the king of gods, sitting on his elephant Airāvata. Behind him is Viṣṇu, with four arms, holding the *chakra* or discus in his second left hand and riding his vehicle Garuda.





KALYĀNASUNDARAMŪRTI ŚIVA (MARRIAGE OF ŚIVA AND PĀRVATI)

In front of Garuda's wing is a small flying figure, and below, a male figure with a crescent.

The figures carved in the façade of this shrine are crude compared with those in the Main Cave and seem to be later imitations.

To the north of this shrine, a little above the drain, a small water-cistern has very recently been opened.

Returning to the Main Cave, we come to the beautifully carved but much damaged panel (marked D on the plan) representing the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī (Plate X). The figure of Śiva is 10 feet 10 inches high. Out of the four hands only the front left one is entire. The right leg is also missing. The god is here represented as having an oval nimbus behind the head and wearing the usual high *gatāmukuta* or head-gear. He is putting on a girdle and a robe that comes over his right hip and is knotted at the left side. His left hand rests on the knot of the robe, the ends of which hang loosely. His *yaññōpavīta* or sacred thread hangs from his left shoulder and passes to the right thigh. His front right arm is stretched to receive in marriage the hand of Pārvatī, which is broken. The face is smiling.

KALYĀNASUN-  
DARAMŪRTI-  
ŚIVA,  
(MARRIAGE OF  
ŚIVA AND  
PĀRVATĪ).

To the right of Śiva we see the graceful figure of the goddess Pārvatī measuring  $8\frac{1}{2}$  feet in height. She is not yet wedded and therefore is shown on the right side. According to the Hindu or Brahmanical custom the wife should occupy during ceremonial functions the left side of her husband. Excepting the legs and arms which are badly mutilated, the figure is fairly preserved. The hair of Pārvatī is shown as escaping in small curls from under the broad jewelled fillet,

and behind her head is shown a disc which seems to form a part of her dress. She wears heavy ear-rings and necklaces, from one of which a string hangs down on her bosom and ends in a tassel. The whole figure is of striking beauty enhanced by the slightly inclined head and the bashful look. Behind her is to be seen the figure of a well-built man, possibly her father, Himālaya, whose right hand is on her right arm while the left holds up a necklace near Pārvati's left ear. His high cap and dress have been carved with more than usual minuteness. Though both the hands of Pārvati are broken, yet it would appear that her right hand was placed in the right hand of Śiva. Owing to its remarkable grace and symmetry the figure can be placed among the best sculptures of the early mediæval period.

To the left of Śiva is a much defaced figure of Brahmā, sitting on his haunches, seeming to officiate as the chief priest in the marriage ceremony. Behind him stands Viṣṇu with four hands and a peculiar cylindrical cap. His front right hand appears to hold a lotus, and the back left hand, the *chakra* or quoit. The other two hands are missing.

Towards the right side of Pārvati, there stands a female with a fly-whisk in her right hand and a well-carved large drum in front. She is wearing necklaces as well as pendant ear-rings and holds a part of Pārvati's robe in her left hand. But for the fly-whisk befitting a maid-servant, she could well represent Pārvati's mother Mēnakā. Behind her is a male figure with a plain cap and curled hair and also a large vessel of water, evidently meant for being used in the marriage





ceremony. The crescent indicates that he is Chandra, the Moon-god

On each side of the head of Śiva, we see flying celestial *muthunas* and ascetics extolling the married couple.

The next compartment encloses a colossal panel of rare workmanship representing Śiva as Gangādhara, GANGĀDHARA-  
ŚIVA (DESCENT  
OF THE  
GANGES) *i.e.*, as carrying the river Gangā (Plate XI) This has been marked E on the accompanying plan The legend connected with the scene depicted in this sculpture is as follows :—

Sagara, a mighty king of the Ikshvāku dynasty, had sixty thousand sons by one of his wives called Sumati. All these sons were very wicked and incurred the displeasure of the gods by their evil ways. When Sagara wanted to perform an *aśvamēdha* or horse-sacrifice, he let loose a horse which Indra, the king of gods, stole away and tied in the hermitage of the great sage Kapila, without the latter's knowledge. The wicked sons of Sagara traced the horse to the hermitage, and mistaking the sage Kapila for the thief, tried to attack him, but were burnt to ashes by his wrath. Sagara, finding that his sons did not return with the horse, sent his grandson Amśumat, the son of Asamañjas, to search for them. Discovering that his uncles had been reduced to ashes by the sage's wrath, he implored Kapila for mercy and was told that if the water of the Ganges were sprinkled on their ashes, his uncles would go to heaven. Neither he nor his son could succeed in getting the water. Bhagīratha, the grandson of Amśumat, however, performed severe austerities

ceremony. The crescent indicates that he is Chandra, the Moon-god

On each side of the head of Śiva, we see flying celestial *mithunas* and ascetics extolling the married couple

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to propitiate the celestial river Gangā, who consented to come down to earth if someone could resist the force of her descent. Thereupon Bhagīratha took to *tapas* or penance and succeeded in thus pleasing Śiva, who stood up to receive Gangā and humble her pride. She came down with full force intending to crush Śiva under her weight, but when she fell on his head, she had to wind through the labyrinth of his locks of hair for a long time without finding an outlet. At the request of Bhagīratha, however, Śiva let her flow down to the earth and she followed Bhagīratha to the place where the ashes of his ancestors lay.

This compartment is 13 feet wide and 17 feet 1 inch in height and has a base rising to a height of some 2½ feet above the floor. The principal figures represent Śiva and his consort Pārvatī, and measure 16 feet and 12 feet 4 inches in height, respectively. Śiva has four arms. His front right hand is held in the *abhaya-mudrā* or the pose of imparting security, while the rear right hand holds a *jatā* or matted hair from which emanates a female figure whose legs alone are now visible. The back left arm is broken at the wrist but it is easy to see that it must have been directed towards the chin of Pārvatī. The front left hand rested on the head of a *psācha* or goblin who seems to stagger under its weight. Śiva wears a necklace, open armlets, heavy bracelets and ear-rings. Round his waist passes an ornamented girdle, from under which his garment hangs down and is tied up in a knot on the left thigh. Over his left shoulder hangs the *yajñōpavīta* or sacred thread which passes on to the right side.

To the left of Śiva stands Pārvatī, wearing a circlet round the brow, from under which the hair is seen falling down in small curls to the temples. She wears ear-rings, necklaces, broad armlets, bracelets, anklets and a girdle with an ornamented clasp. Her left arm hangs down, while the right is bent and held up, but the fore-arm is broken off. Near Pārvatī's shoulder is Viṣṇu on his vehicle Garuda with a serpent round his neck, while near Śiva's right shoulder sits Brahmā on his lotus seat, carried by swans. He is holding a lotus in one of his right hands. To the right, near the foot of Śiva and facing him, is seated Bhagīratha with flowing matted hair. His arms are now broken but evidently the hands were in the *añjali* pose folded on his chest in adoration. Between Śiva and Pārvatī is a *piśācha* or goblin with plaited hair holding a chowry in his left hand and a cobra in the right. To the left of Pārvatī another similar figure is to be seen. The three-headed female figure above the head of Śiva evidently represents the Trivēṇī or the confluence of the rivers Gangā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī. Above Brahmā on a level with the head of Śiva are six celestials, four males and two females. One of the male figures, which looks important, is holding a large elongated object resembling the banana fruit. Above Pārvatī there are six similar figures. All these celestials are shown flying in the air in a conventional way. Here it may be observed in passing that celestials with wings, like the *peris*, were not known to early Hindu mythology.

Next comes a plain building measuring 18 feet in length, 16 feet in width, and 9 feet in height, which might have been a storehouse or residential quarter

CELLS OR  
STORE ROOMS.

MAHĒSAMŪRTI-  
ŚIVA.

of the priest in charge of the cave. The sockets would show that the building was provided with doors, now missing. A similar cell is seen on the opposite side also. Next to the compartment depicting the scene of Gangā's descent is a panel, marked F on the plan, (Plate XII), containing the colossal figure of Mahēsa-mūrti-Śiva, miscalled Trimūrti, the most striking sculpture in the cave. It is situated in a recess, carved deep into the interior of the rock. Excluding the thickness of the pilasters in front, which is about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet, the recess is  $10\frac{1}{2}$  feet in depth. The pilasters are  $15\frac{1}{2}$  feet apart, but inside them, the recess is 21 feet 6 inches in width. In front of the pilasters stand *dvārapālas* or door-keepers. The one to the spectator's left is more mutilated than the other and is  $13\frac{1}{2}$  feet high, the other being  $12\frac{3}{4}$  feet in height. Both are remarkably well carved and are shown in beautiful postures. Their well-executed head-gears are decorated with a crescent on either side. The *dvārapāla* to our right has his left arm placed on the head of an attendant, wearing a wig, a necklace, and a belt. The door-keeper on the other side has an attendant standing in a half-crouching attitude. He has eyes and thick lips, and his tongue is thrust out. In the corners of the opening, both in the floor and in the lintel, are holes, apparently meant for door-posts, and in the floor there is a groove used, probably, for a screen or for a railing to keep off the spectators.

The well-proportioned three-faced bust, occupying this recess, represents Śiva in the form of Mahēsa or the Supreme Being. It is 17 feet 10 inches high from above the base which measures  $2\frac{3}{4}$  feet in height. The







three faces correspond to the three functions of the god, namely, the creation, the protection and the destruction of the universe. Trimūrti<sup>1</sup> would be a correct name for this sculpture if the term is taken in the sense of 'triple-form' (*tri*=three and *mūrti*=form or figure) but not in that of the Trinity, or the Hindu triad representing three different gods, namely, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. The head-gear is no doubt done in the form of *jatāmukha*, the characteristic of Śiva as well as of Brahmā. But as Brahmā is represented with four faces, this bust cannot be his. Nor can we identify it with Viṣṇu, for he wears a *kirita* and not a *jatā-mukuta*. Moreover the principal sculptures in the cave belong to the cult of Śiva. The bust, the central figure in the cave, must therefore naturally represent that divinity, *i.e.*, Śiva. The three functions before mentioned, it is to be remembered, are attributed to three different gods in Hindu mythology. The creation of the universe is assigned to Brahmā, its preservation, to Viṣṇu, and the destruction, to Śiva. To assign them all to one divinity is a Vēdāntic notion which recognises only one god manifesting himself in different forms. The Trimūrti, therefore, symbolises the oneness of God. The three heads emanating from one and the same body thus represent three different aspects of one and the same deity who can assume different forms and names in accordance with the functions he is performing.

<sup>1</sup> As all the panels and carvings in the cave belong to the cult of Śiva, it will not be reasonable to suppose as some have done that the recess originally contained an image of Brahmā and that the caves were connected with the worship of that god.

The front or central face with a calm and dignified appearance represents Śiva as the Creator. The lower lip is thick and the breast adorned with several different necklaces. The front right hand is badly mutilated, excepting for a bangle on the wrist. The front left hand holds a *mātuluṅga* or citron. The head is adorned with a richly wrought *jatāmukuta* having a crescent high up on the right side. In front of the hair is a royal tiara consisting of three large jewels, one of which is placed over the forehead, and the other two, over the ears. The central jewel cut in the *kīrtimukha* form is elegantly designed and beautifully executed. The ears of this face are decorated with an ornament called the *makarakuṇḍala*, as it is shaped like a *makara* or crocodile, here carved in a conventional manner.

The face to our left representing Śiva as Rudra, the Destroyer, has a severe look, cruel eyes, a curling moustache and a beard. The head-dress serves as an abode for several snakes seen wriggling through the matted hair. The ornaments include some of the peculiar emblems of Śiva, such as the human skull seen over the left temple, and a large cobra with its expanded hood. The right hand, which is raised before the breast, holds a cobra twisted round the wrist.

The third face, lying to our right, represents Śiva as the Preserver of the universe. The calm and pacific expression befits this aspect of the deity. Of the three principal gods in the later Hindu mythology it is Viṣṇu who performs this function just as Brahmā does that of creation. For a Śaiva or devotee of Śiva, it is Śiva who is supreme and fulfils all these





ARDHANĀRĪŚVARA ŚIVA (ŚIVA AS HALF MALE AND HALF-FEMALE)

duties and in him all these gods are unified. The ears of this face appear to have been adorned with a *śaṅkha* or conch-like ornament, now partly broken. The hair escapes in very neatly curled ringlets from under the head-dress, which is very elaborately and tastefully ornamented with festoons or pearl pendants. Above the temple is a large leaf, probably that of a lotus, and higher up, at the junction of the head with the central face, a lotus flower with a bud. The left hand has bangles on the wrist similar to those on the two front hands, and holds a lotus.

We next come to a panel, which is marked G on the plan. Here Śiva is represented as *Ardhanārīśvara* or half-male and half-female (Plate XIII). The figure is 16 feet 9 inches high, with one of the four hands on the male side leaning on the bull Nandin. The head-dress consists of a high tiara from which two heavy folds fall on the shoulder on the left or female side, a crescent being shown on the right side. On the left, the hair falls across the brow in a series of small and neatly curved ringlets, while on the right, there is a line of knobs along the under-edge of the tiara. The right ear is drawn down and has only one ring, while the left has a jewel in the upper part and a large ring in the lobe. The girdle passing round the hips is tied at the left side where the ends are shown hanging down. The male arms wear twisted but open armlets and thick wristlets. The left or female arms have broad armlets and a long solid bracelet with thick jewelled rings at the ends. The back pair of hands of the figure is in a fair state of preservation, the right hand holding a cobra and the left, a mirror. The

ARDEHANARIS-  
VARA-SIVA.

front left hand, now broken, seems to have held the lower part of the robe which hangs in folds over both the left arms. The front right arm, bent at the elbow, resting on the hump of the bull Nandin, passes on to the left horn on which the hand rests.

Besides Śiva and Pārvatī, some other principal divinities of the Hindu pantheon are also carved on this panel. At the left side near the back arm of the central figure we see the four-armed Vishnu riding his formidable vehicle Garuda, the king of birds, whose left wing is spread out. The lower left hand of Vishnu is raised and holds a *chakra* or discus swung round the forefinger and the other hand seems to have rested on the knee. Both the right hands are broken. Below is a woman holding a *chāmara* or fly-whisk in her right hand. Her head-dress is carved with minute detail and has a crescent on the left side. Her chignon seems to be decked with flowers. She has large ear-rings and a triple necklace. Two dwarfs are near her. The female to her left is wearing the usual jewellery and carries in her left hand what appears to be the toilet-box of Pārvatī. Between the Garuda and the central figure is the bust of a female holding a flower in her left hand, above this are two other figures, one of whom seems to be Varuna, riding on a *makara* or crocodile, his vehicle. Behind Vishnu are a man and a woman, and under them is a dwarf holding a *chāmara* or fly-whisk.

On the male side of Ardhanaṛiśvara and on a level with Vishnu are Indra and Brahmā. The latter is shown sitting on a *padmāsana* or lotus-seat, supported by five *hamsas* or swans. Three of his faces are visible, the fourth is supposed to be hidden behind the central





PĀRVATĪ IN THE ATTITUDE OF *MĀNA* (A SCENE ON KAILĀSA)



one. He has four hands. His back right hand holds a lotus but the front right one is broken. The back left hand has a sacrificial ladle, now mutilated, while the other holds a vessel of *ghee*. He is wearing necklaces and other ornaments, as well as a robe that passes over his left shoulder and breast. To his left we see Indra on Airāvata, the celestial elephant, whose head is well preserved. Indra holds the *vajra* or thunder-bolt in his left hand, and possibly an *aṅkuṣa* or goad in the right. Between Indra and Brahmā is a figure with a *chāmara* in each hand. Below it is to be seen a large figure of Kārttikēya, the commander-in-chief of the gods, holding a spear in the right hand and wearing various ornaments and a high cap. Between this figure and the bull Nandin is a woman with a fi-whisk resting on her shoulder; behind her we see a dwarf, and a woman whose head is mutilated. In the upper portion, on each side of the central figure, divine *muthunas* and *iśhis* are to be seen. Some of them carry garlands in their hands as offering to the great god Ardhana-riśvara in whom the two creative powers of the universe, the male and the female, are seen unified. Śiva the right half, represents the active, and Pārvatī the left half, the passive principle in Nature.

Further east is a much damaged panel in the south wall of the east aisle, marked H on the plan, which depicts Pārvatī in a somewhat affectionately angry mood (Sanskrit *māna*) towards Śiva. Both Śiva and Pārvatī are seated together on a raised floor and are adorned with the usual ornaments (Plate XIV). Śiva has four arms, now broken. His face and the halo are also damaged. He is seated cross-legged

PĀRVATĪ IN THE  
ATTITUDE OF  
MĀNA (A SCENE  
ON KAILĀSA)

with his left leg resting horizontally on the floor, the right leg being slightly raised. The front left hand placed firmly on the seat is still traceable, with its bracelet, beside the left thigh. The front right hand seems to have rested on the right thigh. Pārvatī is seated to his left wearing a pendant tassel, now almost gone, hanging on her bosom from a thick twisted necklace such as is seen in the panel representing her marriage. Over the left arm and on the right thigh and leg, portions of her garments may still be traced. She appears in a half-sitting posture, her right leg bent at the knee rests horizontally on the floor. The position of her left leg gives an idea of her being ready to get down from the bull Nandin, seated directly below her. Behind her right shoulder stands a female figure with a fly-whisk in her right hand, wearing a crown-like head-gear, ear-rings and necklaces and carrying a child, possibly Skanda, in her lap. On Pārvatī's left, is another female attendant wearing the usual ornaments, and farther off, a male figure, his right hand near his breast and the left resting on the knot of his robe. Behind the right shoulder of Śiva is a female attendant, a fly-whisk in her right hand, and at his feet the skeleton form of the headless image of his faithful attendant Bhṛngī. Behind him is to be seen a tall figure with a high head-dress, ear-rings, necklace and a long robe covering the left arm down to the wrist. At the foot of this figure, in a recess behind the pilaster, stands a dwarf, who is 3 feet in height and has his arms crossed.

The panel is badly mutilated in the lower portion, i.e., beneath the platform on which Śiva and Pārvatī

are seated, and the figures carved on it cannot be made out with certainty. To the left of the bull Nandin is a fat dwarf wearing a wig. Below him are two animal figures, probably monkeys. How the left side was filled cannot now be determined. The rock over the head of Śiva and Pārvati is carved into patterns resembling irregular frets on an uneven surface, possibly to represent the rocks of Kailāsa. At the top of each side are the usual *mithunas* representing *apsaras* and *gandharvas* or celestial musicians. Some of the male figures have curly wigs. An emaciated ascetic to the right holds a basket in his left hand and seems to scatter flowers with the right hand. A little above the head of Śiva, towards the left, a section of what seems to be a bell is to be seen. Possibly this also is a symbol for a *linga* shrine, like the one seen in the panel representing Śiva as killing the demon Andhaka.

Next, we proceed to the east wing. Descending by EAST WING OF THE CAVE a neat flight of steps, each 10 feet 10 inches wide, we reach a spacious court measuring 55 feet in width. This court must originally have had to the north side an opening, now filled to a considerable height with earth and stone thrown there when the court was cleared several years ago. In the middle of the court there is a circular platform,  $16\frac{1}{2}$  feet in diameter and 2 or 3 inches in height, which lies directly in front of the Śiva shrine in the wing. Apparently it was intended for the figure of Nandin which is now missing. To the south of the courtyard is a rock temple on a panelled basement measuring  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet in height. The basement is supported by a low platform, 2 feet 4 inches high. The three courses of hewn stone now

placed on the basement, seem to be of modern origin. The façade is about 50 feet in length. On each side of the steps leading to the temple is a leogryph sitting on its haunches with the fore-paw raised. The head of the one on the west side is damaged. Whether these two statues are occupying their original places or were brought from outside cannot be stated definitely.

ŚIVA SHRINE,  
MANDAPA AND  
CHAPELS

A flight of steps leads to a *mandapa*, marked I on the plan, 58 feet 4 inches long and 24 feet 2 inches wide, which is flanked on each of the east and west sides by chambers, marked J and K on the plan. At the back is a *linga* shrine which has a *pradakṣhinā-patha* or circumambulatory passage, varying from 8 feet 4 inches to 8 feet 9 inches in width. Five low steps and a threshold lead into the sanctuary, marked L on the plan, measuring 13 feet 10 inches wide and 16 feet 1 inch deep. Within is enshrined a *linga* 2 feet 5 inches in diameter, inserted into a *vēdi* or altar measuring 9 feet 5 inches square. This stands in the middle of the floor and is provided with a gargoyle shaped like the mouth of a tiger. The door of the sanctuary is now damaged, but the façade preserves the neat carving, the beautiful frieze running over the pilasters, and the crenellated moulding are still unimpaired.

On either side of the passage is a gigantic statue of a *dvārapāla* or warder with attendants. The statue near the east end is now much dilapidated. The one on the opposite side, that is, to the west of the portico, has four arms and a third eye on the fore-head. His headgear is tied in the *jalāmukuta* fashion and his moustaches are very prominent. He has thick lips. His nose is damaged. A twisting snake seems tied in his

left ear. The elbow of his front left hand rests on the head of an attendant dwarf. The back hand, raised over the shoulder, seems to hold up his robe. The front right hand is broken off but the back one is extant and holds a snake. Above, on each side of his head, is a fat flying figure, probably of a celestial.

Going in the way of *pradakṣiṇā* or clockwise round the circumambulatory path, a rectangular chapel measuring 10 feet 10 inches by 25 feet is to be seen at the eastern end of the ante-chamber. In front of it are two pillars and two pilasters, each measuring 10 feet 5½ inches in height. These are of the same type as the pillars in the main cave, though their capitals are not fluted. One pillar is broken and the other almost gone. Above there is an entablature of sunk panels, measuring about 11¼ inches square. The mortices in the bases and the tops of the pillars show that there must have been a railing, with a door, in the centre of the entrance to the chapel. As the floor of the *mandapa* is low steps are provided to give easy access to the chapel.

The chapel contains several sculptures of good workmanship now soiled by smoke and damaged by rough handling. On the south side is a large figure of Gaṇeśa with the rat, his vehicle, carved near the left knee. To his right is a squatting figure whose head seems to rest on the knee. There is also another figure holding a cobra. Above the head of Gaṇeśa a flying couple or *mithuna* is seen on each side.

At the northern end of the chapel is a standing figure, probably of Śiva, holding a *triśūla* or trident, his left

hand resting on the defaced figure of a *gana* or attendant. Brahmā is sitting to the right on a lotus, supported by swans. Behind him is a monkey-faced dwarf and above, three figures, two of whom, a male and a female, hold offerings in their hands. On the left of Śiva is Viṣṇu, mounted on his vehicle Garuda and holding his mace in one of his right hands. He holds his *chakra* or discus in one of his left hands and the *śankha* or conch in the other. A male figure, below, holds the stalk of a lotus in the left hand. Between this figure and that of Śiva is a female holding a fly-whisk in her hand.

**MĀTRIKĀ  
PANEL.**

The western wall, facing the entrance, has some ten figures carved on it. Of these, the one at the north end represents Gaṇeśa. Next to it is a much defaced male figure, probably of Virabhadra. The remaining eight are female figures, all badly mutilated. They represent the Mātrikās or Divine Mothers who are the *śaktis* (energies or wives) of the several gods in the Hindu pantheon. Their names are (1) Brāhmī, the *śakti* of Brahmā, (2) Māhēśvarī, the *śakti* of Mahēśvara or Śiva, (3) Vaiṣṇavī, the *śakti* of Viṣṇu, (4) Kaumārī, the *śakti* of Kumāra, (5) Andrī, the *śakti* of Indra, (6) Vārāhī, the *śakti* of Varāha, (7) Nārasimhī, the *śakti* of Narasimha, and (8) Chāmundā, a terrific form of Durgā. All have aureoles round their heads. Some carry children, others have them by their sides. Each has beside her a pole or staff surmounted by her ensign, such as a swan, a peacock, etc. The swan is the emblem and vehicle of Brāhmī or Brahmānī, the peacock of Kaumārī, and so on. Their *vāhanas* or vehicles are the same as those

of the deities from whom they originated. These *Mātṛikās*, according to the *Mārkaṇḍēya-Purāṇa*, were the *śaktis* or energies of the principal divinities, who came to attend on Durgā when she was about to kill the demon Raktabīja in the fight against the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha.

Over these sculptures an architrave is to be seen which is 2 feet 10 inches deep. It consists of three plain parts of which the upper is divided into six and the lower into five spaces by various designs or ornaments such as are found in the caves at Ajantā or Kārlē, though they differ from them in having a fantastic face which is technically termed *kirtimukha* (i.e., the face of fame). There is a sunken frieze between these parts, eight inches broad, which still retains the mineral colours with which it was originally painted.

The chapel on the opposite side is plain, its floor being sunk a few inches below the level of the plinth. It measures 27 feet 7 inches by 11 feet 7 inches and has two pillars in front. Water, oozing through the rock above, collects and mostly remains inside the chapel during the dry season. Tradition says that on the night of the *Mahāśivarātri*, the water of the Ganges comes through the roof of this chapel. On that occasion the people of the Island and those from surrounding places flock to it to enjoy the benefit of this miracle and to attend the fair then held.

Returning to the Main Cave, and proceeding towards the north of the eastern aisle, we find a compartment (marked M on the plan), depicting Rāvaṇa attempting to uproot Kailāsa, the sacred residence of Śiva (Plate

EASTERN  
CHAPEL.

RĀVAṆA UNDER  
KAILĀSA.

XV). The legend connected with this sculpture is thus given in the *Purānas* —

Rāvana conquered Kubēra, the god of wealth, and wrested from him his *vimāna* or celestial car called Pushpaka. While he was flying on it near Kailāsa, it suddenly stopped and could proceed no further. Not understanding what was the matter, Rāvana looked down and saw a dark coloured dwarf named Nandīśvara, who told him that he could not continue his journey that way as Śiva was sporting there and had made it inaccessible to everyone. On hearing this Rāvana was very much annoyed, and laughing contemptuously at his ugly appearance and his monkey face enquired of Nandīśvara as to who that Śiva was. Incensed at this insult Nandīśvara cursed Rāvana, declaring that he and his race would be destroyed by the very monkeys towards whom he had shown so much contempt. Rāvana retorted by saying that he would uproot the mountain and throw it out of his path. Then, putting his arms underneath, he lifted it off the earth. Pārvatī, terrified at the sudden upheaval, clung to Śiva, who pressed the mountain down with the toe of his left foot, crushing the arms of Rāvana. Thereupon the latter wept bitterly and gave a tremendous roar that shook the whole world. His grandfather, Pulastya, came and exhorted him to praise Śiva. Rāvana, whose pride was humbled, followed his advice and praised the deity who was moved by his prayers and released him.

Reverting to the study of the sculptures, we see Śiva and Pārvatī seated together on the Kailāsa mountain. Śiva's third eye is clearly marked as are also his large





RĀVANA UNDER KAILĀSA



ear-rings. The figure seems to have had eight arms, now more or less broken. Two of them rest on the hands of attendants, as if the god were trying to steady himself at the sudden shaking of the mountain. One of his right hands holds the *trīśūla* or trident, of which the head is still intact. Pārvatī is sitting on the right side but her figure is badly mutilated. On each side of the compartment is a large figure somewhat resembling the doorkneepers round the *linga* shrine in the cave, but with a protuberance above the brows. The figure on the west side with a prominently carved forehead is marked by snakes emanating from behind his left shoulder. To the left of Śiva are several figures, all more or less defaced. In front, near his foot, is Bhṛngī, easily distinguished by his skeleton form. To the left of Bhṛngī, in front of the large figure behind the pilaster, is Gaṇeśa. Below this group is the ten-headed demon Rāvana, a sword stuck in his waist-band and his back turned towards the spectator. His ten heads are obliterated, and only a few of his twenty arms are traceable. Numerous figures are to be seen above Śiva, to his left is Viṣṇu riding his vehicle Garuḍa, and a tiger, the vehicle of Pārvatī, crouches in the recess close by.

The next panel (marked N on the plan) is the last of ŚIVA AS  
the series of the principal sculptures in the Main Cave, LAKULĪṢA.  
and occupies the recess at the eastern end of the main  
entrance to the north. Here Śiva sits cross-legged on a  
*padmāsana* or lotus seat (Plate XVI). The stalk of the  
lotus forming the seat is held by two Nāga figures  
visible to their waists. The head-gear of Śiva is  
elaborate and his head is surrounded by the usual

nubus The face, now much damaged, bears a placid contemplative expression. The arms are broken at the shoulders and it is difficult to say anything definite about them. It is to be regretted that a somewhat similar figure in the northern wall of the *mandapa* in the western wing of the cave is also similarly damaged, otherwise the identification of the sculpture would have been certain. Comparison, however, with a similar sculpture in the *Dumār Lenā* at Ellora would show that there must have been a club in one of the deity's hands, possibly the left. If this assumption is correct, we may recognise in this figure a representation of Lakulīśa, who, according to the *Purāṇas*, was the last (28th) incarnation of Śiva. Flying above the central figure are groups of celestials. At the right upper corner of the sculpture is the figure of Brahmā seated on his vehicle, the swan, with Indra on the elephant *Arāvata* shown below him. The lower portion of the sculpture is occupied by several figures, one of which seems to represent Sūrya or the Sun-god holding a lotus in each of the two hands. To the left of Śiva is a plantain tree with three leaves expanded and the central germ rolled up. Under his left knee is what appears to be a sun-flower. On each side of the central figure we see a female with a fly-whisk. At the back of each of these attendants another female is seen, but so defaced that only the outlines can be distinguished. Below, on both sides of the plantain tree, are two mutilated figures. Over the plantain tree Vishṇu rides Garuda with curly hair. the faces of both are obliterated. Above Vishṇu is a figure riding a horse whose head and forelegs are broken,

and behind is a *rishi* or ascetic with a rosary in his hand

The ceiling of this compartment still preserves PAIN-  
TINGS. traces of the original painting. From the accounts of the Portuguese writers it would appear that the interior of the cave as well as of the adjuncts was originally painted in different colours to enhance its beauty. De Couto, who noticed the caves in 1603, says that the whole interior, 'the pillars, the figures and everything else had formerly been covered with a coat of lime mixed with bitumen and other compositions that made it very bright and beautiful' This colouring made the figures not only beautiful 'but their features and workmanship could be very distinctly perceived so that neither in silver nor in wax could such figures be engraved with greater nicety, fineness or perfection.' Grose (1750) was very much attracted by the beauty and freshness of the colouring of some of the paintings round the cornices. Erskine (1813) mentions several concentric circles with figures in the roof of the main entrance. In 1835 the remains of some paintings were still observable, which seemed to have originally been red, but had in some places faded to a purple blue. As has been noted, patches of this coloured coating are still preserved on the ceiling in the west portico and also in the Mātrikā chapel in the east wing. How these cave temples looked in ancient days when they were bright with such decorations only those can realise who know the grandeur of the Ajantā paintings.

## CHAPTER VI

### SMALLER CAVES

Having visited the principal cave, we now come to the lesser caves of the Island, including those on the eastern hill. They are six in number. Four of them lie on the western and two on the eastern hill. The accompanying photograph (Plate XVII) is meant to give an idea of the former as seen from the opposite hill.

#### CAVES II-V.

A short walk of about one furlong from the Main Cave towards the east brings us to Cave II, which does not appear to have ever been completed. It has a portico supported by four square pillars, and two unfinished cells. Sometime ago it was cleared along with both of its water-cisterns.

Cave III on the same level as the Main Cave and facing E. N. E. is a short distance away. Its extreme length is about 109½ feet, inclusive of the chapel at the north end. The entrance is blocked by débris, which has been partly cleared, and the interior is much damaged by the water which collects inside the cave. The front was supported by six pillars and two pilasters with decorated shafts and capitals resting on square bases. These pillars have now fallen, but the pilaster on the right side with a part of the cornice remains. The *mandapa* or portico is internally 79 feet in length and 32 feet in breadth. The floor of the chapel at the north end of this *mandapa* is raised to a







height of 4 feet above the portico. Four octagonal columns and two pilasters originally supported the roof. The chapel is plain on the inside and measures roughly 39 feet by 22 feet.

A small chamber measuring 15 feet 9 inches by 16 feet 5 inches is near the chapel. Usually water lies in it to a depth of several inches even in the dry season. The walls of the next chamber, which formed the sanctuary, are of different dimensions. The one at the back measures 22 feet and that in the front, 20 feet 9 inches. The southern and the northern walls are respectively about 21 feet and 22 feet 4 inches in length. Three feet from the wall, opposite the entrance, stands a low *vēdi* or altar, 7 feet 4 inches square. On either side of the entrance to the shrine is a *dvārapāla* or door-keeper crudely carved but with a fine leogryph above, and over it, a divine *mīthuna* flying in the air. Though these figures are badly mutilated owing to the action of water yet the frieze and the jambs still preserve their original carving. In the centre of the lintel is a male figure with six arms, seated on a raised platform. To his left is another male figure, and a crocodile is on each side of this group. The third chamber at the southern end is plain and of the same measurements as the one at the northern end.

Still farther to the south of the Main Cave, is Cave IV which faces east and is even more dilapidated than the preceding one. The *mandapa* or portico is about 49 feet 6 inches long. At each end of the portico is a chapel originally supported in front by two pillars and two pilasters. The one at the north end is 23 feet 9 inches by 17 feet 4 inches and has a cell at the back which

measures 14 feet by 16 feet 4 inches approximately. The cell on the west side measures 13 feet 6 inches in front and 14 feet 9 inches at the back, the depth being about 15½ feet. The chapel at the south end measures 21 feet 6 inches by 17 feet 4 inches and has a cell at the back which is 16 feet 7 inches long by 15 feet 10 inches deep. A shrine with two side chambers lies behind the portico. The door of the shrine is 4 feet 9 inches wide and has on each side of it large *dvārapālas* or warders leaning on dwarfs with two flying figures over their heads. The *sanctum* measures 19 feet 10 inches by 18 feet 10 inches internally and has a low *pīṭha* or altar, 6 feet 11 inches square, containing a *linga* measuring 23 inches in diameter. Each of the two side chambers measures 15 feet square and has doors with projecting pilasters and ornamental pediments. The horse-shoe ornament repeated several times in the carving of the doors is the principal decorative feature.

A little lower down the hill is Cave V, only partially cleared. The entrance is almost blocked with débris and the plain square cut pillars are the only objects to be noticed inside.

CAVES VI-VII. Retracing our steps to cross the ravine and ascending the opposite hill to a height of about a hundred feet above the level of the Main Cave, we reach the sixth Cave (Plate XVIII). It has a portico facing W. N. W. and measuring 73 feet 6 inches long and 27 feet 4 inches wide at the north end and 25 feet 7 inches at the south. There are three chambers at the back and a piece of level ground in front. The portico has four pillars and two pilasters which measure 8 feet 5 inches in height and are about 2 feet square at the base. Two of them are





broken The two side cells are plain but have neatly carved doors which measure 2 feet 11 inches wide and 6 feet 5 inches high They are approached by two steps, 8 inches high, and a threshold of 4 inches The architrave resting on the jambs is about 5 inches wide, with a simple moulding, and then comes a band  $6\frac{7}{8}$  inches broad, with a neatly wrought crenellated ornament. The northern cell measures roughly 12 feet 7 inches square and the southern, about  $11\frac{1}{2}$  feet by 15 feet.

The central chamber of the cave forms the shrine and has a door 7 feet 11 inches high and about 4 feet wide, having well cut pilasters and a frieze. It has two steps, one of which is semi-circular and has a mutilated head of a lion on each side. The other step, measuring  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet, has a low threshold in front. The shrine is almost square, each side measuring nearly 15 feet 7 inches internally. To the back wall is attached an altar, 4 feet 5 inches long, 3 feet 5 inches wide and 3 feet 4 inches high. It is neatly moulded and stands on a low platform, 7 feet  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches by 8 feet  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches. There is a gargoyle or water-spout to the north of it. Its top is hollow, the cavity being 17 inches long and 6 inches wide, but no *linga* or any other image is fixed in it.

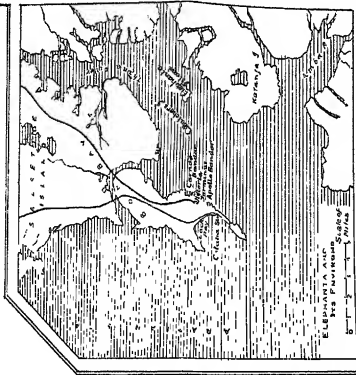
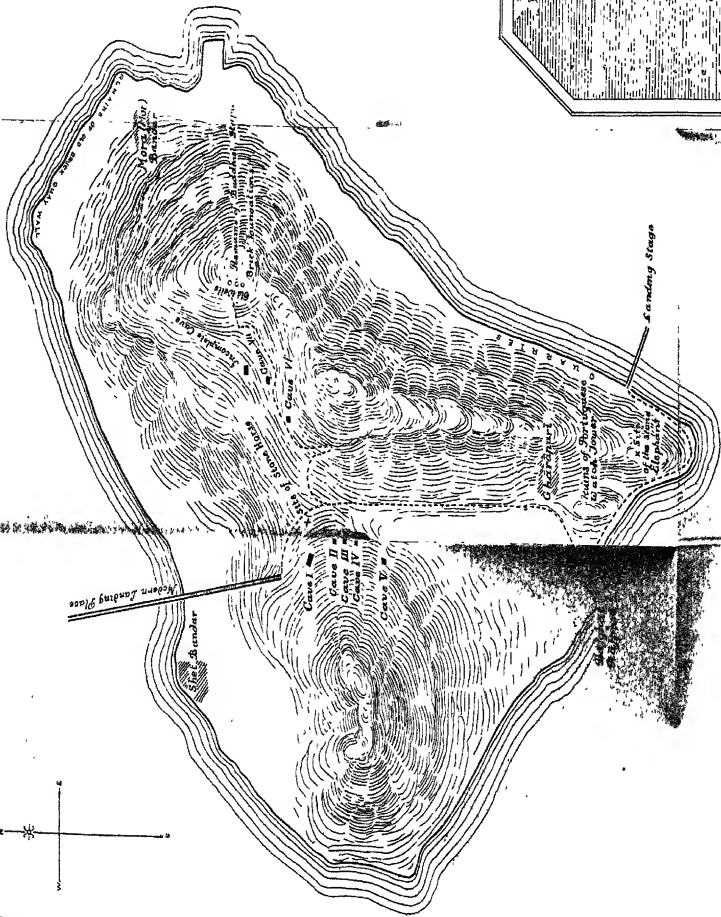
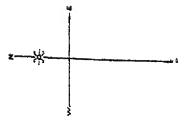
The cave, as has already been noted, was used as a Christian church when it was in the possession of the Portuguese

About 150 yards north of this cave is a small excavation with three partitions or cells. Apparently it was not completed and there is nothing remarkable about it.

Farther on towards the north-east and under the summit of the hill, are three wells cut in the rock, with openings which measure about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet square. Near

OTHER  
ANTIQUITIES.

these wells are some brick foundations, and on the summit of the hill above are the remains of some structure, the nature of which is still to be determined. Possibly they belonged to some Buddhist buildings.



THE ISLAND OF ELEPHANTA

Scale of Miles



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## APPENDIX.

In the foregoing pages all the principal sculptures or scenes carved in the caves of Elephanta have been described. Some iconographical notes about the divinities represented in the excavations are here appended with a view to facilitate further study. That the sculptures of these caves are connected with the Hindu pantheon of the 'epics' and not of the Vedas need not be emphasised. The Hindus since the Vedic age recognise three main gods, namely, *Brahmā* the Creator, *Vishṇu* the Preserver, and *Śiva* the Destroyer. Other gods, including *Indra* who is called *Dēvarāja* or king of the gods, and *Sūrya* are subordinate to them. Even in this triad *Vishṇu* is considered to be the chief. According to the *Padma-Purāṇa*, *Brahmā*, as a result of the curse pronounced on him by his wife, *Sāvitṛī*, because of his ignoring her at the time of the sacrificial initiation or *dīkshā* and of his putting *Gāyatrī* in her place, has no following, so much so that temples exclusively dedicated to his worship are extremely rare, though his image is often seen in the temples of other gods. It would appear that 'the two deities *Vishṇu* and *Śiva* gradually absorbed the special attributes of *Brahmā*, who as the chief divinity of a sect ceased to claim many votaries for two reasons: first because, as a symbol of prayer, he was held to be present in all worship; secondly because, as a symbol of creation, his special work in the cosmos was finished and he could no longer be moved by prayer'. This view would resolve Hinduism into two main sects, namely, *Vaiṣṇavism* and *Śaivism*, the former recognising *Vishṇu* and the latter, *Śiva* as the chief God. The *Sauras* or the devotees of *Sūrya*, the Sun-god, are included amongst the former, and the *Śāktas* or the worshippers of *Śakti*, in the latter. *Śakti* or Divine Energy is unified in *Pārvatī* or *Durgā*, the consort of *Śiva*. *Durgā* has various aspects or forms in which she is worshipped by the *Śāktas*. *Mahishāsuramardini* or the vanquisher of the *Mahisha* or Buffalo-demon is one of her principal forms and is depicted in some of the sculptures in the Main Cave. All the Brāhmanical gods are supposed to have their respective *Śaktis* named after them, but *Pārvatī* or *Durgā* is the chief and represents all the *Śaktis*, who

are considered to be her *vibhūtis* or manifestations of power. Pārvatī is the left half of Śiva and her worship goes hand in hand with that of Śiva.

The true worshipper of a divinity has to look upon the *Ihū-dēcatā* as supreme and as the only fulfiller of prayers. Thus each deity becomes supreme and may be regarded as a symbol or manifestation of all the powers of the One Supreme God. It is because of such ideas that the term Henotheism or Kathenotheism is sometimes applied to the religious belief of the Hindus. The Vedāntic conception embodied in the maxim *ēkam-advītiyam Brahma*, meaning 'there is only one unrivalled God' is a development of such ideas.

Only the chief characteristics of the main divinities connected with the sculptures in the caves of Elephanta are mentioned below. For fuller details some work on Hindu mythology should be consulted. The names of these gods are given here in alphabetical order.

**Agni** is the god of fire. He rides a ram, has two faces, three legs and seven arms, holding various weapons. **Svāhā** and **Svadhā** are the names of his wives and are also used as exclamations for making oblations to gods and manes respectively.

**Asura** in the *Purāṇas* is a general name for the enemies of the gods.

**Brahmā** has four heads and as many arms. He may be represented as standing, or as seated on a *haṁsa* (swan) or a lotus. On his chest he has a *yajñōpavīta* or sacred thread. His hands may carry the following emblems:—(1) *akṣamālā* or rosary, (2) *kūrcha*, i.e., a handful of *kuśa* grass, (3) *kamaṇḍalu* or gourd, (4) *śrucha*, i.e., a large wooden ladle, (5) *śruva*, i.e., a small sacrificial ladle and (6) the *ājyasthālī*, i.e., a vessel for holding clarified butter. Two of his hands may be shown in the *abhaya* (security-imparting) and the *varada* (boon-giving) postures. He may be represented as seated in a chariot drawn by seven swans. At times the four Vedas and the *ājyasthālī* are shown in the front, and *ṛishis* around him. Sometimes he is represented with only two arms instead of four, the right arm being bent with the palm turned upwards.

**Dakṣa**, the son of Brahmā, is one of the progenitors of the human race. He had twenty-four fair daughters, personi-

fications of domestic virtues. Of them **Satī**, personification of truth, selected the uncouth ascetic Śiva for her husband and thus incurred the displeasure of Dakṣa. The latter once celebrated a great sacrifice, but invited neither Śiva, his son-in-law, nor Satī, his own daughter. Satī, however, went to the sacrifice of her own accord, and was much insulted. She thereupon threw herself into the fire and perished. Śiva hearing this was angry and, going to the sacrifice, completely destroyed it. He pursued Dakṣa and decapitated him, but afterwards restored him to life. Thenceforward Dakṣa acknowledged his supremacy. According to another account, Śiva, on hearing of the incident, pulled off a hair from his head in great anger and dashed it against the ground. A powerful demon arose who, being ordered by Śiva, went to the sacrifice and completely destroyed it cutting off the head of Dakṣa at the same time. This demon is consequently regarded as an incarnation of Śiva and is known by the name of **Vṛābhadrā**.

**Durgā**—See below under **Pārvatī**.

**Gaṇēśa**, the god of success and wisdom, is the elder son of Śiva and Pārvatī. He has the head of an elephant, and a mouse for his vehicle. He may be shown standing or seated, with two, four or more hands, holding an *aṅkuśa* (goad), a vessel of sweets and other attributes.

**Garuḍa**, the son of Kaśyapa by his wife Vinatā, is the king of birds, and the implacable enemy of serpents. He is the *vāhana* or vehicle of Viṣṇu.

**Indra** is the king of gods, holds the *vajra* or thunder-bolt, in his hand and rides an elephant called *Airāvata*.

**Aindrī** or **Indrāṇī** is Indra's wife or *śakti* whose emblems are similar to those of her husband.

**Kumāra** or **Kārttikēya**, the second son of Śiva, is the god of war and the commander-in-chief of the gods. Usually he is represented with six faces, his cognizance being the peacock and the long *śakti* or spear in his hand. He is one of the chief agents of Śiva's destructive power and his *vāhana* or vehicle, the peacock, is an appropriate emblem for the pride and pomp of war.

**Mātrikās** or Divine Mothers, seven or eight in number, are the representations of the energies of the principal gods of the Hindu pantheon. They are **Brāhmī**, **Māhēśvarī**, **Aindrī** or

Indrāṇi, Vārāhi, Vaishnavi, Kaumārī, Chāmūṇḍā and Nārasimhī. Sometimes Nārasimhī is left out and Charchikā is put in her stead. By means of their respective vehicles or cognizances they can be easily identified. According to the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa* (*Devī-Māhātmyam*, X, 48), they are only the different forms or aspects of Durgā. Sometimes only seven of these goddesses are shown, Charchikā and Nārasimhī being left out.

Śiva is one of the three principal gods. He is especially the destroyer. In the Vedas, he is known as Rudra, 'the Terrible', but in the epics he is usually called Śiva, 'the Auspicious one'. His preferential worship developed in the epic period. He controls creation and the *liṅga* or phallus is his symbol. One of his forms is Ardhanārīśvara, half-male and half-female, symbolising the unity of the generative principles. He has three eyes, one of which is in the forehead. They represent his view of the three divisions of time, the past, the present and the future, while the crescent, above the central eye, marks the measure of time by months; a serpent round his neck, the measure of years; and the necklace of skulls and serpents about his person, the perpetual revolution of ages as well as the successive extinction and generation of the races of mankind. His thickly matted hair is coiled about his forehead. On his head he bears the Ganges, and is consequently called Gaṅgādhara. His dark blue throat is due to the deadly poison he swallowed to save the world when the gods churned the ocean to obtain *amṛita* or the nectar of immortality. He wears the skin of an elephant and holds in his hand a *triśūla* or trident, his principal weapon. He carries a kind of drum called *ḍamaru*, holds a deer in one of his hands, and rides a bull called Nandin generally shown in front of his shrine or image. He married twice. His first wife Sati committed suicide on being insulted by her father Daksha. She was reborn as Pārvatī the daughter of Himālaya, the king of mountains, and through severe penance re-obtained Śiva for her husband. In this form she is known by several names such as Durgā, Kālī, Umā, Gaurī, Bhavānī, etc., and is the chief object of worship with the *Śāktas*, who adore *Śakti* or Divine Energy as the Supreme Being.

Śiva is also worshipped as a great ascetic and is said to have reduced Kāma, the god of love, to ashes by a glance from his central eye, because Kāma attempted to create in him passion for Pārvatī whilst he was engaged in meditation. As the destroyer of the universe he is said to have burnt the whole

world as well as the gods, including Brahmā and Viṣṇu, and rubbed the ashes thus produced upon his body. The use of ashes by his worshippers is connected with this myth. The legend that Śiva, on his way to destroy the demon Tripura, let fall tears of rage which grew into berries called *rudrākṣa* (=the eye of Rudra) gave rise to the use of rosaries of these beads by the worshippers of Śiva. Kailāsa, one of the loftiest northern peaks of the Himālayas, is considered to be the favourite abode or heaven of Śiva.

**Sūrya** is the sun god usually represented as holding lotus flowers in his hands and sitting in a chariot drawn by seven horses. **Aruṇa** the younger brother of Garuḍa is his charioteer.

**Trimūrti**—It is the symbolical representation of the unification of the three principal gods of the Hindu pantheon, namely, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, who, according to the monotheistic conception, are the hypostases of one and the same Supreme Soul (*Paramātmā*).

**Varuṇa** in later mythology is the god of the ocean and of the western quarter. He is represented with a noose in his hand and as riding a crocodile.

**Virabhadra** is the powerful attendant of Śiva. See under **Dakṣa**.

**Viṣṇu**, the principal god in the Hindu Trinity, is differently represented in different places. He is usually shown seated on his vehicle Garuḍa. He has on his breast a peculiar mark called *Śrīvatsa* and holds in his four hands, the *chakra* or discus called *Sudarśana*, the *gadā* or mace named *Kaumōdākī*, a *padma* or lotus, and the *śankha* or conch named *Pāñchajanya*.

**Yama** is the god of death who holds a stout staff or *daṇḍa* in his hand and rides a buffalo.

## GLOSSARY.

*Apsaras*.—A celestial nymph.

*Architrave*.—The beam or lowest division of the entablature, which rests immediately on the column.

*Cornice*.—Moulded projection crowning the part to which it is fixed.

*Entablature*.—The portion of the structure supported by the columns and consisting of the architrave, frieze and cornice.

*Frieze*.—The part of the entablature lying between the architrave and cornice and enriched with figures or other ornaments.

*Ganas*.—Attendants of Śiva.

*Gandharvas*.—Celestial musicians.

*Hinayāna*.—See under *Mahāyāna*.

*Jatāmukuta*.—Head-gear formed by the twists of matted hair into a tall cap.

*Kīrtāmukuta*.—A conical cap sometimes ending in an ornamented top carrying a central pointed knob. Covered with jewelled bands round the top as well as the bottom, it is worn exclusively by Viṣṇu.

*Kīrtimukha*.—Literally means 'the face of fame' but is used to signify a conventional sculptural design which is characterised by a grinning face.

*Mahābhārata*.—The great Sanskrit epic of India, the theme of which is the war between the sons of Dhṛitarāshṭra and the sons of Pāṇḍu. It consists of eighteen books and is commonly attributed to the sage Vyāsa.

*Mahāśivarātri*.—A great festival of the worshippers of Śiva which falls on the 14th day of the dark fortnight of the month of *Māgha*, i.e., January-February.

*Mahāyāna* (=Great Vehicle) is a later phase of Buddhism, the earlier or the original form being known as *Hinayāna* (=Little or Humble Vehicle). These names originated with the Neo-Buddhists who extolled their own church as *mahā* or Great and called the other one *hinā*, Humble or

Little. The original doctrine required monastic discipline which did not appeal to the laity. *Mahāyāna* became more popular, for it was more akin to Brahmanism. Mahāyānism "is a pantheistic doctrine with a theistic tinge, in which the Buddha takes the place of the personified *Brahman* of the *Vēdānta*". It recognises Buddhas and the cult of Bodhisattvas (Beings destined to become Buddhas) and allows pompous ceremonies and the worship of images which do not appeal to a Hīnayānist, who holds that Buddha has attained *Nirvāṇa* and cannot be worshipped consequently. It is owing to this belief that we do not find images of Buddha in the early sculpture. The Mahāyānist would worship the 'Primordial' Buddha and the Bodhisattvas, his attendants, in the representations. With the growth of this doctrine the margin of difference between the Hindus and the Buddhists gradually faded almost entirely away. This infusion led to another type of theology, viz., the Tāntric form of worship in which God is worshipped with his *Sakti* and which was the chief cause of the decline of Buddhism in India. Both these phases, i.e., *Mahāyāna* and *Hīnayāna* spread in India and abroad. In Ceylon, Burma, Siam and Cambodia it is the *Hīnayāna* form that is professed. In Korea, China and Japan both exist, the *Mahāyāna* predominating, while the Buddhism of Nepal, Tibet and Mongolia is the *Mahāyāna* with a considerable infusion of Tāntric ideals.

*Mudrā*.—Pose of hand.

*Nāga*.—A semi-divine being having the head of a man and the tail of a serpent, inhabiting *pātāla* or the nether regions.

*Padmāsana*.—A lotus seat or a kind of sitting posture in which the legs are crossed and the hands are placed in the lap with the palms turned upwards.

*Pradakṣhinā*.—A ceremonial act performed by walking round a sacred edifice, object or person from left to right or clockwise.

*Purāṇas*.—18 sacred works or epics supposed to have been composed by Vyāsa. Their names are:—(1) *Agni*, (2) *Bhāgavata*, (3) *Bhaviṣyat*, (4) *Brahma*, (5) *Brahmāṇḍa*, (6) *Brahmavaivartta*, (7) *Garuḍa*, (8) *Kūrma*, (9) *Līṅga*,

(10) *Mārkaṇḍeya*, (11) *Matsya*, (12) *Nārada*, (13) *Padma*, (14) *Śiva*, (15) *Skanda*, (16) *Vāmana*, (17) *Varāha* and (18) *Vishṇu-Purāṇa*.

*Stūpa*.—Primarily a funeral mound or tumulus, but with the Buddhists a structure erected either to enshrine some relic of the Buddha or of a Buddhist saint or to commemorate some very sacred spot.

*Sukhāvatī*.—The heaven of the eternal Buddha Amitābha of the Mahāyānists.

*Tāṇḍava*.—The cosmic dance of Śiva, symbolising the perfect joy Śiva feels in the creation, which he makes, controls, destroys and renews at will. It is so-called after Tanḍu, the devoted worshipper of Śiva.



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